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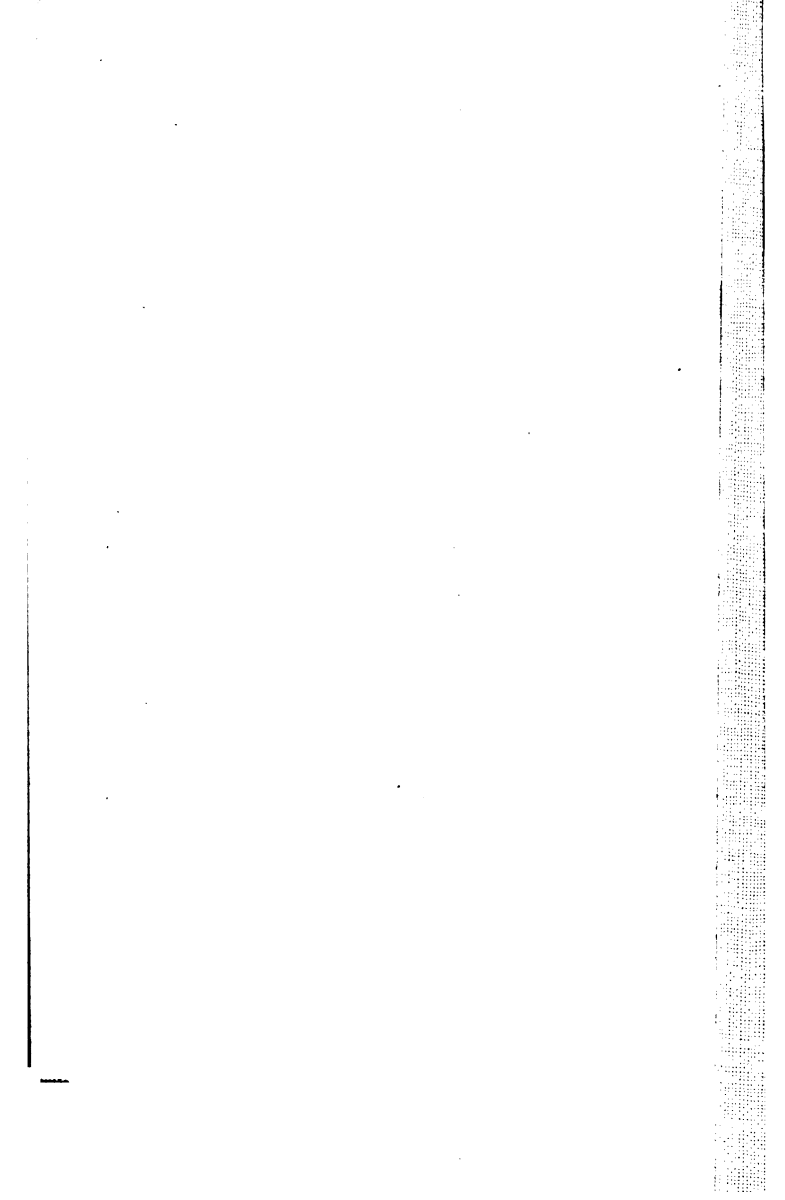
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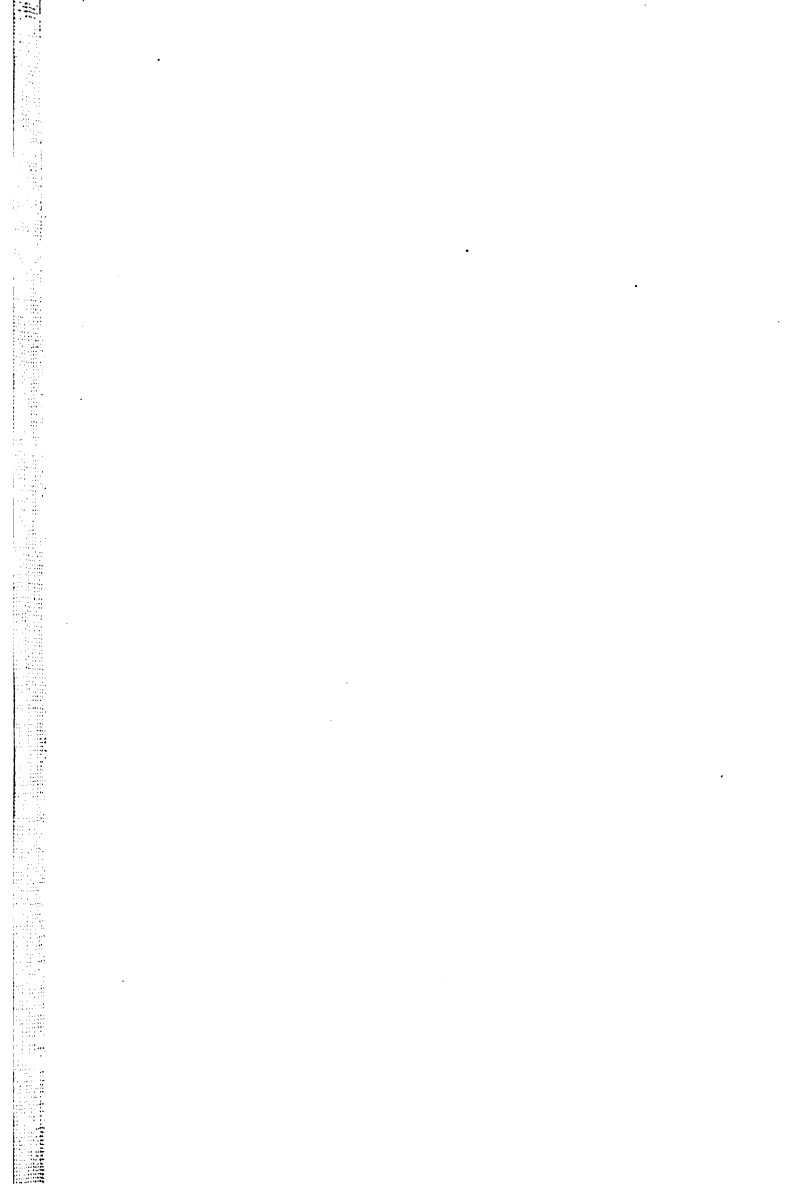
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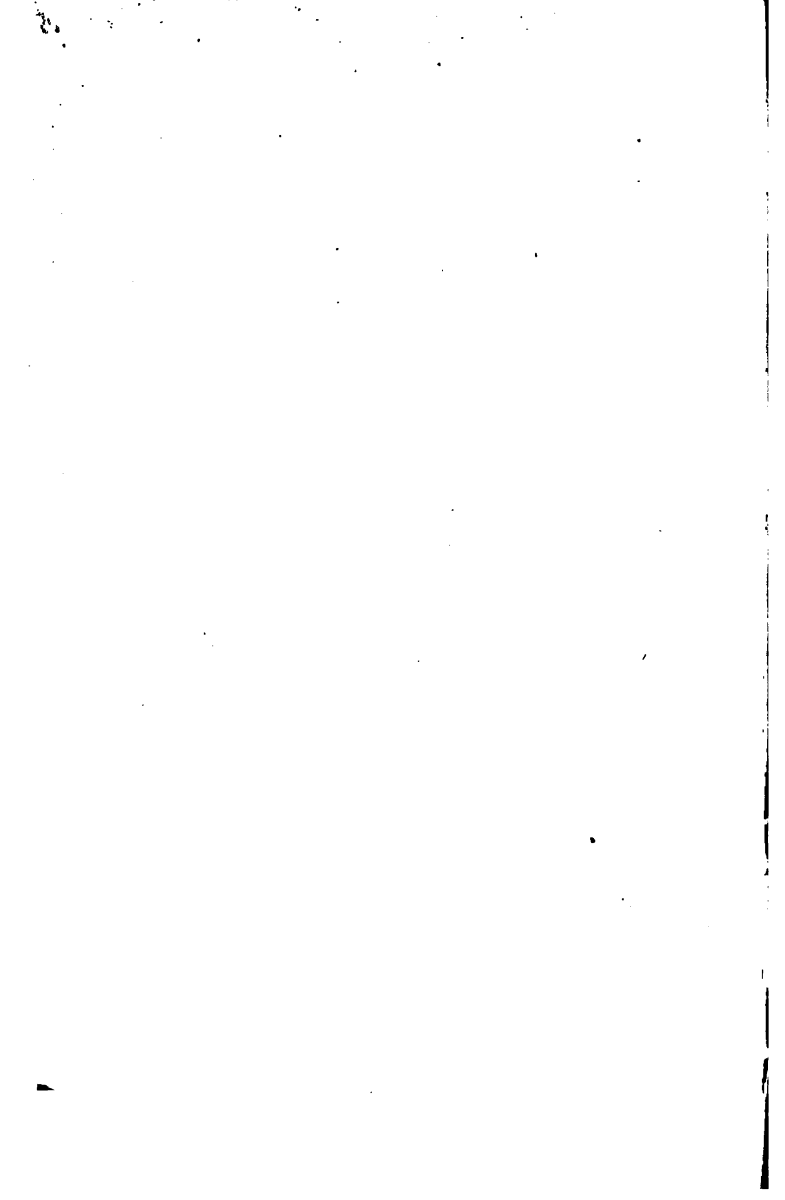


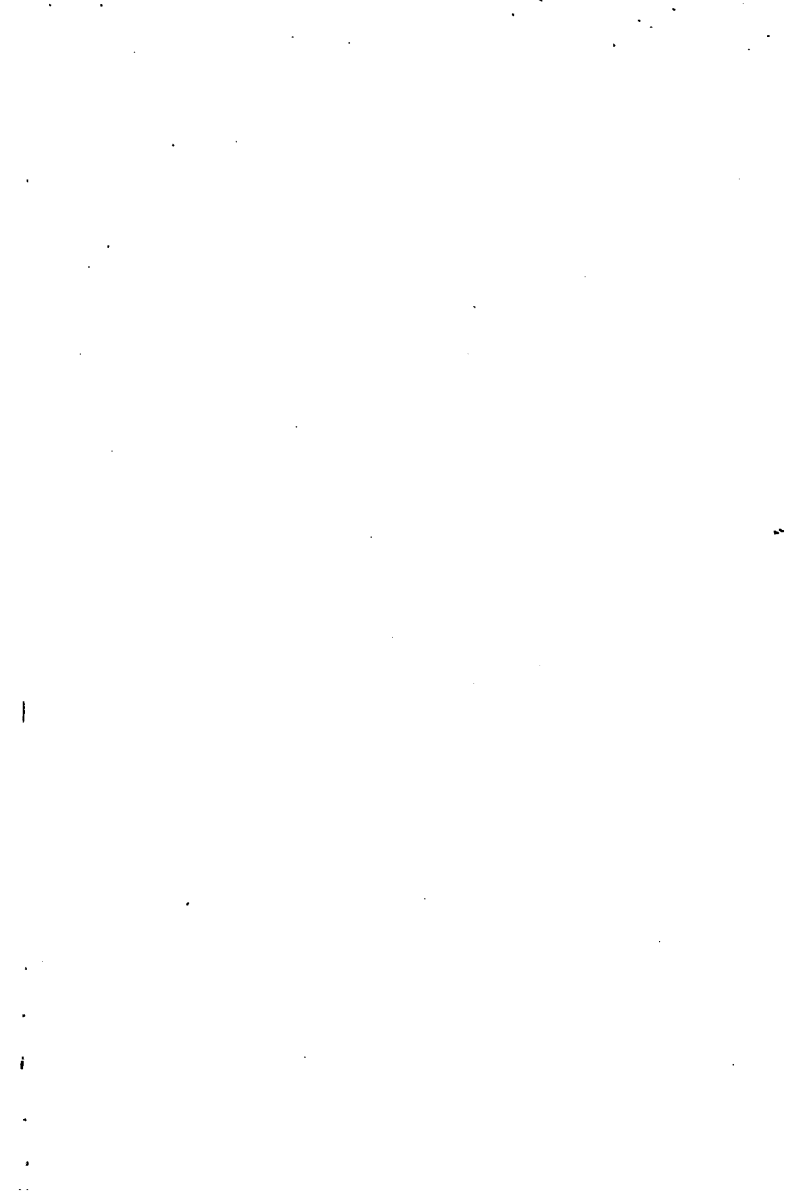
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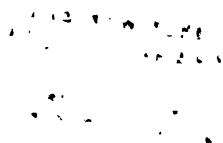








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IN GOLD
AND SILVER



The golden rug of Bermanshah
Gardens of the woods
A shadow upon the pool
The silver fox of Hunt's Mallow

BY
GEORGE H. ELLWANGER

AUTHOR OF
"THE GARDEN'S STORY,"
"THE STORY OF MY HOUSE"

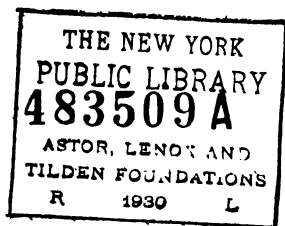
ILLUSTRATED

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Much have I travelled in the realms of gold
KEATS

NEW YORK
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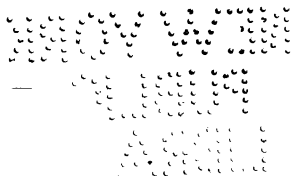
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TO
MY FATHER AND MOTHER,
THIS VOLUME
IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.

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THE GOLDEN RUG OF KERMANSHÂH: A SOUVENIR OF IRÂK-AJEMI.

And I said, "By the love I bear you, visions of beauty, come before me and play me magnificent shows!"—LEIGH HUNT, *A Sight of the Gods*.

I fear, O Arab! that thou wilt not reach the Cabâh, for the road that thou art taking leads to Turkistân, or the region of infidels.

—SAADI, *The Rose Garden of Gulistân*.



FIRST heard of the rug while sojourning with several friends in Algiers, through a Persian *dellâl*, one of the numerous class of venders who pass from town to town with their pack of stores. Often the stores, which usually consist of so-called curios, are next to worthless; and again, among them there may be many articles of rare beauty and value. The itinerant merchant is a close buyer, shrewd, cunning, and an excellent judge of human nature. When to the general attributes of his

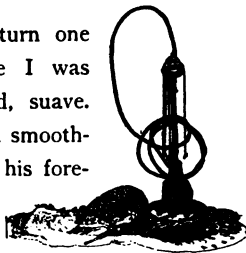
calling is added the possession of good taste in his selections, his pack is always deserving of careful examination. His prices, it is true, may be exorbitant; but the prices demanded by the average Oriental tradesman are seldom fixed, and the asking price and the absolute selling price are generally two distinct matters.

A wide traveler who visits many remote provinces, whose zeal is unflagging, and whose opportunities for purchasing the wares in which he deals are great, the roving tradesman is often a true *virtuoso*, who really loves his calling and the numerous beautiful objects with which he is so closely associated. He may buy a unique example for a song, or he may pay a large price for it in cash or in exchange. In his constant visits from house to house and place to place, as the harvest seems most ripe for the gleaning, he gathers many works of art that are out of the ordinary reach of commerce, and that only he may supply from his extraordinary depot of stores. Not infrequently, as a lucrative trade paves the way to

The Golden Rug of Kermanshâh. 3

prosperity, he becomes a dealer in gems and jewels, and from the little bag which he carries concealed on his person flashes forth a mine of precious stones. There is little chance for prolonged indecision in one's dealings with this personage. It is rarely that his wares can be duplicated, and once his business in a place accomplished, he vanishes with his belongings as silently as he appears. If through your parsimony, therefore, you have failed to secure the objects of your envy, you must remain forever the loser. To know a desirable object is one thing; to know it and secure it, another. In his magic pack you are not unlikely to discover the very Indian idol you may long have been searching for, the sword that severed the head of a râjah, or the ideal ruby of your desire.

I found him awaiting my return one afternoon at the hotel where I was stopping — swarthy, sunburned, suave. His long, black, silken beard fell smoothly from his massive chin; on his fore-



finger gleamed a rare antique graven gem, while his velvet sandals shed no sound as he approached me with a profound salâm. He addressed me in a fluid voice in excellent French, and his manners evinced far more than the average refinement that one expects from his class. The collection he would do himself the honor to show me I would find well worthy of inspection. I need not necessarily buy, but it must prove a pleasure to me to examine his rarities; many were unique examples of ancient art, which he himself could not undertake to replace at any price. Not a line of his impassive face relaxed as he continued to descant upon his stores; neither his jet-black eyes nor his firmly-molded mouth expressed the least anxiousness or cupidity. He remained grave, dignified, serene.

His treasures would have graced a pashâ's palace, and have tempted a saint to violate the tenth commandment. There were carved ivories, jades, inlaid work, ancient Chinese porcelains, iridescent *reflêt* tiles, Shirâz and

The Golden Rug of Kermanshâh. 5

Broussa embroideries, antique armor, splendid damascened Khorassân blades inscribed with verses from Saadi and Firdousee, lacquers, old bronzes, India silken stuffs, and rugs.

But the jewels of his collection, gathered with rare taste and judgment from many lands, were his rugs—a collection of antique prayers, thirteen in all, representing the rarest blossoms of the Oriental loom. Rugs absolutely and geometrically straight, each one perfect of its kind, even to the usually puffed and crooked Meccas; rugs with a delicate bloom upon them rivaling that of a ripe peach; rugs with a pile like velvet and beflowered like a parterre; silky rugs, satiny rugs, damasked rugs; rugs with the ancient dates inscribed—a rainbow of hues and tints and shades.

I well remember them. There was a Me-lace with an embroidered vine border of crocus and hyacinth, and primrose prayer-disk; a heavy velvety Khorassân gorgeous in the four shades of its golden floriage; an Ashiret camel's-hair finely woven as a Cashmere shawl,

its purple bloom like the haze that hangs on distant hills; a superb sage-green Pergamos with a center of mignonette green; a lustrous old Ladik with a double prayer-disk of cardinal and maroon; a magnificent wine-colored Herât glossy as a leopard's skin; a gray Bokhara prayer; a Coula full of graceful fantasies, the mosaic design in brocade work upon the terra-cotta field, its five "S's" of the upper panel worked in blue and gold; a Kuba opalescent as an Abalone shell, its silver self-center supported by two columns of black; a palm-leaf Senna such as I had never seen equaled in design, sheen, and odd combination of colors; a Mecca arabesqued and foliated in gold on a brown velvet ground; and, finally, two ancient Geordes or Yourdes, a perfect pair, symmetrical as if cast in a die, without a spot, patch, or flaw, the one with a violet and the other with a lavender prayer-disk. The Constantinople bazaars and vast carpet warerooms contained no such examples of the ancient handicraft of the inspired workers of the loom.

They were unique masterpieces of the long-ago.

My offer was quickly made—one third of the fabulous sum the merchant demanded. He would not break the collection under any circumstances, even if it never left his hands; it belonged and should be preserved together in its entirety. For that matter, he did not care to part with it. "For where might it be reproduced? It had been the labor of years, and mirrored the crowning glory of the weaver's art when the artist labored not for riches, but for the love of art itself. The silken carpets promised by the Koran to the goodly in the next life alone might rival these."

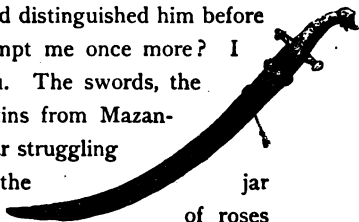
My proposal was rejected as quickly as it was made. "I have but one price," was his reply. To attempt a compromise then, I knew would be impolitic; I should only be showing my hand, and I was determined to possess the rugs at a more reasonable figure if possible.

"You have my address; when you place your collection within my reach, I will be glad

to confer with you. Your treasures are most desirable, it is true, but I do not possess the magic ring of Aladdin. 'All intelligences awake with the morning,' saith the Rig-Veda; you will think better of my offer to-morrow. I shall remain two days ere I leave for Bombay."

At the same hour on the subsequent afternoon the merchant called again, his bearing marked by the same dignity and courteous impassibility which had distinguished him before

"You wish to tempt me once more? I am glad to see you. The swords, the jades, the tigers' skins from Mazanderân, the silver boar struggling with the serpents, the jar of green attar of roses from Ghazepore, I should like to examine more carefully. The Yung-Ching gourd-shape vase decorated with white mice on an ivory ground, the green silk damask mosque-hanging with blue borders diapered with lotus-flowers and birds, the cloisonné enameled Ming beaker



The Golden Rug of Kermanshâh. 9

with red dragons and vampires, the inlaid inro with chrysanthemums and butterflies, the bronze temple-censer, the lacquers—I only glanced at them hastily yesterday. The rugs, you know, it is impossible to consider on your terms; is it not a Persian adage that was graven upon the golden crown of the wise monarch Noosheerwân, ‘Stretch thy legs no farther than the size of thy carpet’?”

“The rugs which I had the pleasure of showing Monsieur—”

“Are desirable, certainly, but not on such extravagant conditions. Indeed, I do not really need them at all. Where should I place them? my collection is already large. To please you I might look at them again; there are always the upper rooms where they might be placed, and, moreover, in the living-rooms a change of floor patterns is restful to the eye. Or, possibly, they might be utilized as hangings. You have considered my offer?”

“Monsieur is an amateur, and must have recognized at once that my price was not un-

reasonable. *Le goût coûte cher.* Monsieur made a serious mistake in not immediately securing so exceptional a collection. The terms which he deemed excessive scarcely covered their cost—a bagatelle for such priceless textiles. It was a chance in a lifetime that Monsieur has chosen to throw away. The rugs are sold."

"Sold! sold! at your price? to whom?"

"Chaplin, buyer for the Paris *Bon Marché*, heard of them after I left Constantinople, and came here this morning and secured them on the spot."

Ah, the evils of procrastination! Another had I added to the long list of vanished opportunities. Alas! their beauty might only remain as a poignant recollection. "The hand which hath held a violet doth not soon forego her perfume, nor the cup from which sweet wine hath flowed his fragrance," saith the poet of Shirâz. Willingly would I have paid the merchant his fabulous sum, could I not have obtained them otherwise; such marvelous

specimens were reasonable at any figure. In the extortionate clutches of a professional buyer they were now past recall. He would treble the purchase price; they would be hidden in the château of a Rothschild, or buried beyond my sight in the museum of some greedy collector.

"Monsieur does not regret his loss more than I, for I now perceive he was not in earnest in his offer. I like to see my treasures pass into the hands of the amateur who purchases for love, and not for mercenary gain. But perhaps I can console Monsieur. The garden contains many flowers, and if one has plucked the roses, there may still remain the lilies."

"Thy mouth uttereth sweet things. But in the words of Omar :

Each Morn a thousand Roses brings, you say ;
Yes, but where leaves the Rose of Yesterday ?

And this first Summer month that brings the Rose
Shall take Jamshyd and Kaikobâd away.

And in the refrain of Villon of old :

Prince for this sevennyght be not fain,
 Nor this twelfmonthe to question wher
 They be, withouten this refraine,
 'Nay wher are the snowes that fell last year ?' " *

" I speak of that which I know. Moreover,
 is it not likewise hymned in the Rubaiyât?—

Irām indeed is gone with all his Rose,
 And Jamshyd's sev'n-ring'd Cup where no one knows ;
 But still a Ruby kindles in the Vine,
 And many a Garden by the Water blows.

" There is a rug in Kermanshâh, in Persian
 Kurdistân, within the confines of the province
 of Ardalon—a large, silk hanging-rug—such as
 hath no equal in all Irân. Allah displumes
 the hues of the sunset sky, but here they glow
 immutable. It is as consummate in its beauty
 and perfection as the smile of voluptuous wom-
 an, the cool flow of a woodland spring, the

* Stephen Temple's translation of *Ballade Des
 Dames du Temps Jadis* :

Prince, n'enquerez, de sepmaine
 Ou elles sont, ne de cest an,
 Que ce refrain ne vous remaine :
 Mais ou sont les neiges d'Antan ?

liquid strains of the bulbul's song. In its radiant hues, its enchanting blendings and interblendings, the artist has caught the swift-flying light and transmuted its rays, giving symmetry to the glare of day, and fixing the effulgence of the moon-illuminated night. Known as 'The Golden Rug of Kermanshâh' from its golden center and the place of its production in the district of that name, it is one of the seven famous large Persian silk antiques, as familiar to the Oriental connoisseur as are the Madonna di San Sisto or the Venus di Medici to Christian peoples. Missing for more than a century, it has only recently reappeared, whence I have been unable to learn. It was undoubtedly purloined and secreted during the long interval, similar to many paintings of your old masters.

"Its production dates from the reign of Karim Khan, who died upward of a hundred years ago, and it is as absolutely perfect as on the day of its completion. Ay, a hundred-fold more perfect; for each year of its cent-

ury of age has added fresh bloom to its beauty—the bloom which age alone may yield. It was designed and executed by the talented and lovely niece of the Khan, and represents the work of a lifetime. Familiar with the tenets, literature, traditions, and mysticisms of Islâm, into it is incorporated her subtlest inspirations in the form of poetry, art, and legendary lore, all fashioned and traced in the finest of silken strands. Withstanding the mutations and vicissitudes of Time, it has marked the fall of empires and beheld dynasties crumble to the dust. Amaranthine in its youth and charms, it has remained forever young while Shahs and Sultâns ruled their allotted span, and Sultânehs perceived their beauty fade. The very dyes employed in its fabrication—its resplendent greens and blues and golds—produced from herbs of the mountain-side, are secrets of the past. The rose unfolds her fragrant petals but to wither and decay; the lily exhales her perfume for an hour: but the fancy that conceived and the hands that

wrought its marvelous design, though inert beneath the cypress shade, live and pulsate through its colors still. As the ear is entranced with the cadence of music, so the eye beholding it is filled with its beauty. For thrice the sum I offered you my collection perchance you may be able to obtain this. Possessing it, you will possess the talisman of Oromanes, and have secured perpetual content."

It was as I had supposed : the French buyer was exultant over his possessions, refusing to relinquish them in part or as a whole ; he already had several places for them on his own terms. Wealthy connoisseurs would dispute over them, and implore them of him as a priceless boon. Why should I complain ? I had had the opportunity, and had chosen to let it escape.

Chagrined at my disappointment, upon further inquiry I at once determined to change my plans, and accompany the merchant on his return to Persia to secure the Kerman rug.

The supreme beauty and rarity of the collection that had escaped me was enough to convince me that the silken rug would justify his description. My time was my own, the season of the year most favorable for the journey. I should be glad, withal, of the opportunity to explore a country that it had always been my ardent desire to know more intimately. My guide, who, besides his native tongue and French, understood both Turkish and Arabic, was remarkably intelligent, and his thorough acquaintance with the customs, joined to his familiarity with Persian history and poetry, could not fail to prove a source of pleasure and instruction. Opportunities for sport would be frequent. Game of numerous kinds was abundant in many portions of the country—hares, red-legged partridges, ducks, snipe, and water-birds, together with the exciting chase with falcons for the great habâra, or noble bustard.

If, after all, I should fail to secure the main object of my pilgrimage, I might proceed to Shirâz, hidden amid its roses and vocal with

its nightingales. There I might sip its famous wine, eat its figs, dates, and nectarines, and luxuriate in its delightful climate, while adding to my collection from its renowned bazaars which were out of the rapacious grasp of the ordinary traveler. Celebrated for its carpets from time immemorial, it would prove a unique experience to collect rugs in the home of Hafiz among the howling of dervishes, one of the favorite chants with which they entertain the stranger being the one in which they sing that the true believer's road to heaven and voluptuous houris must be washed with the blood of infidels. But for the sake of its splendid carpets one could afford to risk the dervishes and its proverbial earthquakes.

Three routes were open to us : the old Assyrian, Babylonian, and Roman route from Alexandretta, crossing the Akma Dagh Mountains to Aleppo, Harrân, Mardin, Mosul, and Baghdâd ; that from Beyrout to Damascus, and thence through Syria and the pashalic of Baghdâd ; or the roundabout passage by water

through the Red Sea, Straits of Ormuz, Persian Gulf, and the Tigris. Previous to my sudden resolve it was part of the plan of the two years' foreign travels of myself and friends to visit India, China, and Japan, as a portion of our Eastern trip. Our yacht, freshly equipped for the voyage, was in waiting, and my friends would willingly turn from their course if I still persisted in starting upon so foolish an errand.

Though longer by water, the journey would be far pleasanter than the shorter and indeed precarious caravan route skirting the Syrian Desert, or even that of the well-watered mountainous district between the Euphrates and the Tigris. Favored by fair winds and weather, in due time we arrived at Mohamme-râh, our friends bidding us farewell and commending us to the mercies of Allah. From this point it is a monotonous voyage of about five hundred miles by steamer to Baghdâd—past green banks and groves of date-palms as far as Kornah, the supposed site of the Garden of Eden, and thence with the shores of

the river fringed by grass reeds and bushes for its only vegetation.

The hundred mosques of the former capital of the empire of the Caliphs, the shrine of Saint Abdul Kadir, its famed gardens, its bazaars, and its motley crowd, detained us but for a few days while awaiting the return journey of a large caravan to Teherân and Mâshed, with the karwanbâshi or leader of which my companion was acquainted. I was fortunate in my mount, having secured a wiry, powerful horse belonging to a venerable Hadji, that had thrice performed the pilgrimage to Mecca and back, and that could readily amble seven miles an hour. On the saddle which went with his trappings was stitched a sentence of the Koran—"All who follow where I go reach Paradise."

In accordance with a recommendation made in the Koran, we set out on Friday at the most auspicious hour—that which immediately follows the noonday prayer. The route to our destination extended fifty-four *parasangs*,

equivalent to about two hundred and seventy miles, northeast, and, though marked by no unusual incidents of Eastern travel, proved both novel and exhilarating. As we rode out through the gate of Imâm Azâm we marked the fringe of palms that borders the shores of the Euphrates grow gradually fainter, and one by one the minarets recede in the distance while we advanced upon the sterile plain toward Yakubabâd. Thence, resting by night for the most part at poor caravanserais, or khans, the journey was continued through Kazrabâd, Khanakin, and Mian Jangal, near the edge of the great Persian plateau; through Kurind, the picturesquely situated capital of Kurdistân, with its vineyards and gardens and lines of poplar-trees, and over rocky ranges and small plains of silt to Mahi Dasht—the “yearly birth - giving plain,” stretching for leagues toward the east below.

The numerous mountain-ranges and fertile valleys abounded with game, and were brilliant with the flora of early spring. The saffron or

yellow crocus was in bloom, covering the rocky hillsides; and the air was laden with the delicious penetrating perfume of the bunch-flowered daffodil. The early bulbous iris, too smiled from sunny banks and hollows, in company with scillas, purple muscari, the round-leaved rest-harrow, and a throng of Alpine flowers. Near Kurind, women were gathering the myrtle-like leaves and stems of the camphire or henna, which, after drying, are made into a paste with lime-water to dye the hair and nails, the women abstaining from its use at the death of their parents and husbands. An extract is also obtained from its aromatic small blossoms which is used in the bath, and as a perfume in visits and religious ceremonies.

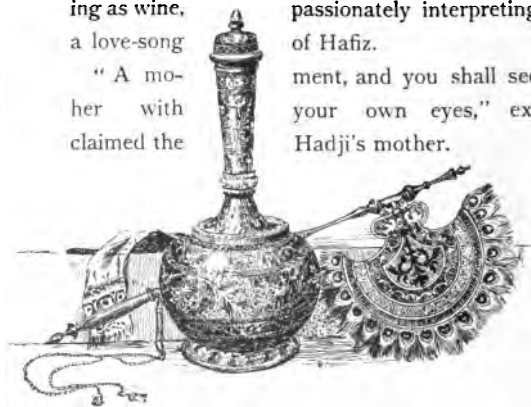
From the green Zagros hills we looked down upon the windings of the Kara Soo River, the ruined walls of the ancient town, and the minarets of the great mosque of Kermanshâh, long ere the caravan threaded its narrow, tortuous streets. Here, taking leave of our escort, we proceeded at once to the southwest-

ern suburbs, the home of the Hadji and his brother. A warm welcome was extended my companion by his aged mother, who, despite her advanced years, bore traces of her youthful beauty. She spoke in Persian with great rapidity and in an excited manner, though from my limited familiarity with the Persian tongue I was unable to follow the trend of her discourse. Startlingly, amid a brief lapse in the conversation, the music of a lute accompanying a contralto voice of magnificent volume yet exquisite sweetness, vibrated through the apartments, like a song heard in a dream—a voice sensuous as a perfume and intoxicating as wine, a love-song

“A mother with claimed the

passionately interpreting of Hafiz.

ment, and you shall see your own eyes,” exclaimed the Hadji's mother.



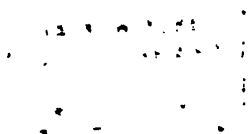
And preceding us to the *anderûn*, the speaker returned soon afterward, motioning us to follow her in silence. Through an aperture of the heavy *portière* which shut off the inner portion of the apartment, we could see the fair performer unobserved, reclining, lute in hand, on the silken cushions of a divan—a dazzling vision of youthful charms. In the full flush of her alluring loveliness she recalled some gorgeous tropic flower, its petals just unfolded to the light and sun. Thus, high upon some towering tree of the jungle, or heaving upon the bosom of some lilled lake, the *Vanda* or the *Nenuphar* blooms unseen save by wandering butterfly and bee. A delicious odor of Oriental spices and essences seemed to emanate from her as from a censer, charging the air with the mingled odor of nard and galbanum, myrrh and attar of roses. How came she here, this glorious exotic, in this secluded town? For beauty has its price in the Orient, and this was not a Sultân's seraglio. Such beauty, meseemed, justly belonged to the

Prophet, to stroll with him amid the alleys of Paradise, or loll on silken carpets in heavenly *anderûns*.

Whene'er with soft serenity she smiled,
Or caught the Orient blush of quick surprise,
How sweetly mutable, how brightly wild
The liquid luster darted from her eyes !
Each look, each motion waked a new-born grace,
That o'er her form a transient glory cast ;
Some lovelier wonder soon usurped the place,
Chased by a charm still lovelier than the last.

There were great rubies in her finely-molded ears, and a *torque* or necklace of large yellow pearls caressed her full, white throat, from which depended a heart-shaped turquoise surrounded by sapphires. A *bazubând* containing a talisman clasped her smooth, rounded arm. Diamonds and rubies flashed from her fingers, and ruby serpents entwined her shapely wrists. Dressed in the prevailing Persian house costume, in a short-sleeved vest of diaphanous yellow silk, and short embroidered petticoats reaching above the knees, there were no obtruding folds of the *feredjé* to conceal the voluptuous bust and arms, the superb





The Golden Rug of Kermanshâh. 25

play of the limbs and hips, and the opulent curves of her figure. The light shed by a silver candelabrum fell full upon her beauty—on the luxuriance of her Titian hair, her eyelashes and arched eyebrows tinged with henna, and the pomegranate of her ripe red lips ; upon the pearly whiteness of her teeth, the softness of her skin, and the luminousness of her passionate gray eyes.

From a stand of blue and red inlaid work a bronze incense-burner discharged a thin spire of fragrant smoke. At its base reposed a silver *kaliân* and a pair of embroidered sandals. Two hanging, antique Geordez prayer-rugs, and some fine old Persian blades, were the principal adornments of the walls. On the superb Kerman carpet were an ivory-



an unfinished embroidery, a great Angora cat dozing upon a tiger's skin, and numerous musical instruments: an ancient shawm, a poet's *rebâb* or Arabian stringed instrument played with a bow, a *nefir* or species of haut-boy, an Algerian guitar of wood inlaid with tortoise-shell, the catgut strings of which are plucked with a plectrum; a *kanoon* or Turkish dulcimer, with strings of lamb's-gut on a triangular sounding-board; a *santir* with its wire strings set in couples and tuned by metal keys.

She may have been eighteen, or a year younger; it is difficult to judge the age of an Oriental girl. She was still singing. It was Shirân, the lovely Georgian, now the odalisque of the Hadji's brother, a voluptuary whose dissolute life and morose nature had sorely displeased his mother. To this, and to the son's absence, we owed the glimpse of the beautiful odalisque whose features by rights should be beheld of all living men by her master alone.

His brother was away from home, the Hadji explained ; and, alas ! the rug had been sold to a Sheikh and slave-dealer of Teherân, in part exchange for the lovely Georgian. Far better that I had never started on the journey, or heeded the persuasions of the Hadji. I had relinquished my long-contemplated trip to India and China, for what ?—to be stranded in an estranged Persian town, with its lack of creature comforts, and with the hardships of a yet longer journey before me should I continue my undertaking. There was also the constant danger of sickness from exposure, change of climate, and poor food ; and I found it more and more difficult to dispel the remembrance of the funereal burden I had heard chanted by a band of Baktash dervishes before the shrine of the Tekiyeh at Baghdâd :

The black Camel, Death, kneeleth once at each Door,
And a Mortal must mount to return Nevermore.

The loss of the merchant's collection should have warned me at the onset of the futility of accomplishing my object. Ill-luck proverbially

and almost invariably repeats itself. Even now the rug might be beyond the power of recall, enshrouded in some distapt mosque, or enshrined in an omrâh's hall. No nut-brown *Habeck* from Abyssinia, nor golden-haired *Tcherke* of Circassia, however alluring, could retrieve it, did it still remain in the possession of the Sheikh; the glitter of golden lira alone might wrest it from his usurious grasp.



After all, was it worth the pains and the price it would cost, even could I succeed in attaining it? The Shirâz and Isfahân bazaars could supply many rare products of the loom, without my continuing a hazardous search for an object I had never seen. Again, what guarantee had I of its existence, or that, in the case of its existence, it would realize the merchant's descriptions?—the mere words of a crafty tradesman whose very calling was but an end for pecuniary gain. I had but his promises and honeyed phrases. To turn back, however, was now virtually out of the question; the yacht had long since sailed from Mohammerâh. The vision of the voluptuous Georgian rose before me. If such loveliness had indeed been trafficked for the rug, as my companion had informed me, it must realize the descriptions of its beauty.

“Monsieur hesitates to proceed? Allah is great; even if it be already disposed of, the chances are it may yet be obtained. It is worthy Monsieur's while to try. It is as

beautiful as the odalisque of the velvet eyes."

Upon mature reflection I determined it was as well to proceed as to return. Our escort was assured, and it might be a long time ere we could find a safe convoy with which to retrace our steps. To proceed to Isfahân and Shirâz would prove a fatiguing journey, and be impracticable besides, without suitable protection. Moreover, the Hadji seemed as disappointed as myself at the turn events had taken.

Four days had been fixed as the limit for our halt. It was immediately after the noon-tide prayers on the fifth day that we mounted our horses at the khan, and, again joining the caravan, passed out of the northeastern gates of Kermanshâh. Our course lay northeastward toward Bisitoun, the Bisitoun mountain-range rising abruptly on our left; through Sahna, seated amid its groves and gardens, and on to Kangawar, four thousand feet above the sea; through Sadawâh to Hamadân, the

former Ecbatana and ancient capital of the Median Empire.

We were traversing the great historical highway from Irân to Mesopotamia, from Ecbatana to Babylon, from Teherân to Baghdâd—the same as that traversed by the conquering armies of Tiglath-Pileser, by Alexander on his return from the land of the Imâms, and since followed by expeditions innumerable of war, of rapine, of pilgrimage, and of commerce: for the course of these great caravan routes has scarcely varied since remote antiquity, fixed as they are by the greater or less abundance of water, or the conformation of the country they pass through. Conquerors have died and are forgotten, peoples and customs change with the centuries, languages and races become extinct, but these arteries of travel still remain as they existed thousands of years ago, when the Pleiades sparkled above the hosts of Sennacherib, and the Star of the East shone down upon the Wise Men of old. In the onward march of the centuries, will the

neigh of the iron charger, I marvel, ever resound amid the hills of Hamadân, and startle the antelopes of the Mount Orontes plain?

Along the route we passed ferocious-looking Kurds with conical caps of black sheepskin, long, bushy hair, and jackets of thick, white woolen; bands of travel-stained pilgrims bound for the shrines of Meshed Husseïn, Alee, and Imâm Moosa, beyond Baghdâd; a trio of fair young *Suzemaneeah*—

Trois belles filles,
L'y en a'z une plus belle que le jour,

who laughingly urged my companion and myself to accompany them home; wildly gesticulating dervishes with unkempt beards and disheveled hair, and ram's horns slung across their sunburned shoulders by a thong, repeating the *Vanitas vanitorum* of Firdöusee: "The spider weaves his net in the palace of the Cæsars, and the owl keeps her watch, like a sentinel, upon the ruined tower of Afrasiâb."

Kourdi girls we saw amid the hamlets, of graceful carriage, handsome features and physique, dressed in tight-fitting shirts, short jackets, and innumerable petticoats, the arms bare from the elbow and the legs from the knee downward. From one of these, near Kangawar, I purchased, as a memento, the diadem of beads she wore across her forehead, together with a finely-woven rug which she stated had been wrought by her own hands. There were lovely Persian roses blooming in her cheeks.

“ Another occasion for Monsieur to add to his collection of delightful souvenirs. The Rose bloometh that its fragrance may be breathed ; the flower of Youth cometh but to flee away, evanescent as the footprints of the Camel on the Desert sands.”

The simple toll I claimed was naïvely granted, while the *dellâl* looked on and smilingly stroked his beard. Her name was Hooseinee, she informed us, meaning “ beautiful.” Time, no doubt, in his all too rapid flight, would

evolve her into a houri of Paradise, where, let us hope, there are better caravanserais than those which have succeeded the nine hundred ninety-and-nine of Shah Abbas, and where caravans pause longer than did ours at Kangawar.

“And will there be celestial houris as beautiful as Hooseinee?” I inquired of my companion, than whom none was more familiar with the code of Mahomet.

“Assuredly! How could man exist without them? Each true believer will be possessed of sixty-two, besides the wives he had in the world below.”

“But what will become of Feth Alee Shah, who had seven hundred wives? According to the extremely liberal allowance meted out to the ordinary among the faithful, he should be entitled to at least several thousand, and this would soon deplete the supply in Circassia unless the ranks of the unlovely were pressed into service. Perhaps the Prophet thinks with Marie de Medicis, ‘woman is always young; she is always twenty in some corner of her

heart.' And the *farâshis* or carpet-spreaders, for so many of the fair—of course they can not be expected to spread their rugs themselves?"

"Monsieur forgets that the Prophet ordains for all, and that everything has been provided for."

"But the veils of the houris?—will they wear *yashmaks* or *chadârs* in the gardens of Paradise? Imagine, for a moment, the possibility of their lovely eyes and lips being shrouded, their beautiful complexions masked, and their alluring contours concealed by hideous *feredjés*. Surely it were impossible for Paradise to exist with *yashmaks*!"

"Again Monsieur forgets that there will be no jealousy in the realms above, and consequently there will exist no need for *yashmaks*."

"And the poets—tell me, will Omar, Saadi, and Hafiz sing on high with harps of gold?"

"Already immortal here below, how much more renowned must they be in the world to come! In the very nature of things, the poet's

strain and the bulbul's song shall never cease to charm."

Through villages hung high upon the hills we filed by worshipers performing their orisons in the streets at sunset at the muezzin's call; vagrant Arabs we encountered roaming the plain on fleet coursers, while their wives and children tended their flocks; droves of asses and mules laden with salt from Mendeli, jangling with bells and munching from their nose-bags at their baiting-places their dole of corn; sheep, goats, and oxen contentedly grazing on verdant upland pastures; meek-eyed camels and dromedaries goaded by merciless dragomen, trudging patiently, as in Abraham's day, with their burden of wheat and dates and corn.

We rested two days at Hamadân, a town of fifteen thousand inhabitants, during which time we explored its attractive environs and the historic shrines of Esther and Mordecai, besides enjoying the luxury of a Turkish bath. At one of the khans we drank the Hamadân wine,

a white wine of similar flavor to sparkling St. Péray, and a red wine not unlike the Listrac and Moulis growths of the Gironde. It was but natural, after having sipped of the potent juice of the Hamadân vine, and while watching the sunset fade behind the heights of Mount Elvend, to dwell upon a fancy of the Rubaiyât :

Think, in this batter'd Caravanserai
Whose Portals are alternate Night and Day,
How Sultân after Sultân with his Pomp
Abode his destin'd Hour, and went his way.

A Moment's Halt—a momentary taste
Of Being from the Well amid the Waste—
And Lo !—the phantom Caravan has reacht
The Nothing it set out from—Oh, make haste !

It was natural, too, as I mused in the bare apartment at the khan, to conjure up the splendors of the past, when the ancient city, leaning from its hanging gardens, was surrounded by its seven concentric walls, variously colored in white, black, scarlet, blue, orange, silver, and gold ; when the Temple of the Sun and Palace of the King, fashioned of cedar

and of cypress, and whose pillars and ceilings in portico and peristyle, incrustated with gold and silver scales, reverberated with the shouts of revelry and Bacchic glee; when the cohorts of the Macedonian conqueror peopled the streets in all the panoply of war; when, later, ravaged in turn by the invading armies of Seleucus and Antiochus, it became the summer resort of the Median, Persian, and Parthian kings and their gilded retinues. To-day, the couchant lion of stone placed by the command of Nebuchadnezzar to guard the town from excessive cold and snows, and the fragments of columns and polished capitals, are the sole vestiges that exist of the once magnificent and most ancient metropolis of Media.

During eight months of the year one of the most delightful climates in the world, it was not without regret that I left Hamadân. But caravans do not linger, and I was becoming doubly desirous, withal, to reach Teherân. The traveler who can pause as long as he

would in a place that charms, and hurry away from one that displeases, must seek other fields than those of Irâk-Ajemi. Teherân is situate forty-eight *parasangs* northeast from Hamadân, equal to about two hundred miles, with wretched khans and miserable accommodations along the route; for, in planning and keeping the average khan, Johnson's aphorism, "The finest landscape in the world is improved by a good inn in the foreground," still remains totally disregarded by the Persian architect and comprador.

Filing slowly out of ancient Ecbatana, while the karwanbâshi, who headed the caravan, solemnly muttered a "bismillah" or invocation to Allah, we started on our first stage to Malagird over the low mountains and hills which separate the dreary Malagird plain from that of Hamadân. From Malagird we proceeded to Zara across an uninteresting level plateau, and from Zara rode on to Nebaron, a distance of fifty miles, the latter being the principal village between Hamadân and Teherân.

Continuing our course toward Kushak, the scenery changed as we ascended the Karaghan Mountains and crossed them by the picturesque pass of Azâd Dagh, seven thousand feet above the sea, with the majestic cone of Damavand towering ten thousand feet above the range. With its sister villages, the little hamlet of Kushak, where we obtained a supply of bitter, brackish water, had recently been devastated by famine and cholera. The inhabitants of the vicinity, my companion informed me, think that these visitations are sent by Div Sefeed, the Horned White Demon of Mount Damavand, though tradition asserts that the monster fell a victim to the invincible sword of Rustêm when mounted on his famous steed Ruksh. From Kushak to Rabadkareem, a stage of nearly thirty miles, we saw no sign of human habitation amid the bare and treeless waste, save an old caravanserai in ruins, telling its tale of the mutability of earthly things. Even the banditti that haunt the neighborhood of the deserted cara-

vanserai near the latter place did not show themselves to relieve the monotony of this utterly dreary stage. A relief it was beyond expression to leave Rabadkareem behind, and continue our march over the plain—the last stage to our destination.

Meanwhile I had referred frequently to the object of our journey. But beyond assuring me that we would undoubtedly succeed in accomplishing it, provided that I left the matter entirely with my companion, I could gain but little additional information on this point. Since our departure from Hamadân I had observed the *dellâl* and the leader of the caravan in frequent consultation—a matter I should scarcely have noticed, but for the fact that they invariably ceased their conversation on my approach. “It was my friend,” the *dellâl* explained, “who brought the odalisque to Kermanshâh.”

It was some time after the noonday prayers ere, looming in all the enchantment of distance through the purple haze of the plain, the Per-

sian capital rose before us, vaguely outlined against the Elburz chain. I had visited Teherân twice before, but never had it appeared half so inviting as it did after our prolonged journey. The hardships of the march, the



poor food and water, had already proved a sore infliction, and I was profoundly grateful that within a few hours I should be able to obtain much-needed rest and accustomed comforts. Soon the great wall and earthworks which clasp the city like a girdle became dis-

tinctly visible, as mosque and kiosk, pavilion and tower, slim minaret and gilded cupola, shaded cypress grove and masses of verdure drew nearer and nearer, like the realization of a beautiful dream.

After weeks of patient journeying, how many caravans, leaving the barren plain behind, had not attained the splendors within through the welcome portal over which waves the yellow and green standard of Irân! Wearied and travel-stained, we likewise pressed through the magnificent southern gate of the capital of the "King of Kings," to see the sinking sun irradiate the snowy ridge of the Shimrân, while the nightingale warbled amid the planes, and the muezzin's solemn call to prayer rang out from the minarets of the mosque of Maschide Shah.

When, a fortnight later, I awoke from the delirium of fever, I found the Hadji seated by my side, his face as impassible as when I first met him at the *Mustafa Supérieur* at Algiers.

And yet methought a smile was lurking in his jet-black eyes.

“Ah! I am more than delighted to find Monsieur convalescent. For one not inured to the climate, and the discomforts of caravan travel, the journey was too fatiguing. But Monsieur has had the best of medical care, and”—glancing toward a fair Persian girl, of whose presence I had hitherto been unaware—“his nurse has been unceasing in ministering to his comforts. Though he has addressed her unknowingly as Hooseinee, her name is Mahmoudé. We are no longer in Kangawar.”

“‘Mahmoué,’ you say? How beautiful their names! And yet, even a commonplace name becomes beautiful when indelibly associated with beautiful things and beautiful thoughts. Surely they will be enshrined among the houris of the world to come?”

“As surely as the sun will woo the rose, the moon arise to light the lover on his way. The road before them should be paved with jade, and swept with perfumed brooms plucked from

the silken beards of padishâhs," replied the Hadji. "In a few days I perceive Monsieur will be himself again ; it now only remains for him to read the Koran, and join the ranks of the faithful."

"And the golden rug—is it secured ?"

But the Hadji had departed, and to all my interrogations my attendant professed profound ignorance.

Three days afterward I was conducted by my companion into a luxuriously appointed house, where, after being ushered in by the eunuch, we were handed *kalâns* and tea by a page while awaiting the master's entrance. The Sheikh was absent on our arrival at Teherân, I had already been informed, and had only returned a week previous from a pilgrimage to Mâshed—after Mecca and Kerbellâh the holiest city in the world to the Mussulman—having gone thither to make arrangements for the sale of the rug for the Harem or inner sanctuary of the sumptuous shrine of Imâm Rhezâh.

I now learned for the first time the import of the consultations between my companion and his friend during the journey. The latter had informed the Hadji of the particulars of the trade with which he had become familiar in his travels, between the Sheikh and his brother; and the information thus obtained had rendered it within my companion's power to treat with the slave-dealer on reasonable terms; for the lovely odalisque, who had been bartered in part exchange for the rug, had been abducted by the minions of the Sheikh from a remote seraglio. The rug itself was still in his possession, and it now only depended upon myself whether I cared to secure it on the terms demanded, the sole condition being that neither the Hadji, his friend, nor myself would divulge the secret. In due time the master appeared, and after the usual salutations and the tender of a glass of arrack he bade the eunuch appear with the rug.

The soft Oriental sunlight streaming through the mullioned windows fell upon its splendor,

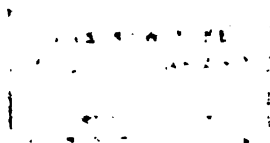
revealing its iridescent lights and marvelous hues as I changed my position, like the play of an opal. The merchant had not exaggerated its beauty. It glowed like a magnificent opal, and shone like the fires scattered by a cluster of precious stones. I can but faintly outline its beauties ; its exuberance of detail and splendor of coloring none but a Persian poet might portray.

The central panel was in the shape of a diamond with curved lines, having a background of white, typical of purity, in the midst of which figured an emblem of royalty, succeeding which was a large diamond figure comparable only to a superb canary stone in brilliancy. Covering this and surrounding the crown was an intricately wrought tracing of vines and flowers grouped in manifold colors, representing the nobility, the flower and the chivalry of the kingdom. Freely interspersed with these in low relief were the heads of sacred animals and birds worshiped and held in esteem by Persians. The glowing band of pure sap-

phire-blue succeeding the yellow divided the ~~golden~~ or upper classes from the lower or common people, who figured as a compact mass of flowers upon a ruby ground, symbolizing the populace and life-blood of the nation.

From each of the four sides of the diamond stood out in high relief the head of a sacred cow—the guardian gods or *Cerberi* of Irân, ever watchful to prevent evil from entering its domain. A large blank space, like a great Oriental pearl, succeeded this lustrous center, its most striking feature being the effect produced by different lights upon it, according to the angle of view and shiftings of the nap. This silvery space represented the sea and the desert that separate Persia from the outside world. Four peacocks, portraying the pride and vanity that prevail in the world without the pale of the Prophet, flanked each of the corner panels. Within this expanse, wrought in *mezzo rilievo*, the struggle between sacred animals and birds with serpents and mytho-





logical monsters proclaimed the conflict between good and evil.

Surrounding the outer border were two bands worked in the traditional designs of Kermanshâh. Between these was a border of deep ruby-red, spangled by geometrical figures of gold outlined with black, and studded at short intervals with medallions of pure silver thread, the edge of the sides being likewise worked in silver thread.

Sentient with beauty and animate with harmony, its varied hues vibrated through every chord and octave of the colorific scale, like the consonance of a harp or the carol of a bird. No tapestry ever spun might equal its fineness of texture and the intricacy of its graceful arabesques, nor no flame of mediæval stained glass surpass the glory of its coloring and the life that leaped from every facet of the design.

The price demanded seemed exorbitant ; and yet, what ancient Flemish or Italian textile of equal size could compare with it at twice the sum ?

"Monsieur need not necessarily decide to-day; he can examine it again to-morrow, if he chooses," said the grim custodian, fixing his glittering eyes upon me like a bird of prey.

Again I remembered the Paris buyer and the loss of the merchant's collection. But the holder refused to let it pass from his possession without receiving the entire purchase price. It was a far cry to London and golden lira; and I was now trebly anxious to remove the rug beyond all power of reprisal. Once more the Hadji proved an oasis in the desert: "There are Monsieur's friends who were about departing for Stamboul, with whom he can communicate by telegraph." It was smooth sailing when, to my intense relief, the means of ransom were received, and with the Hadji, who had proved so loyal, I finally set out for Constantinople. From Teherân an excellent, well-traveled highway leads to Casbeen and Agâ Babâ, passing thence through wildly romantic scenery over the lofty pass of Kharzân to Koodoom, Imâm Zadé, Rescht, and Enzeli.

From Enzeli the journey is easy by steamer through the Caspian to Bakû, by rail from Bakû through Georgia and the city of Tiflis to Poti, and thence by steamer through the Black Sea to the Golden Horn.

At the Hotel Royal, almost the first person I met was the Paris buyer.

"I am just leaving for Paris, with a superb collection. I missed you at Algiers. You look wearied; you have perhaps been making the voyage of the Nile?"

"No; I have just returned from Persia."

"Ah! you have no doubt visited Teherân?"

"I stopped there on my return from Kermanshâh."

"So far out of the ordinary caravan route? The journey must have been extremely fatiguing. A few years since I went to Isfahân and Shirâz; but I shall never repeat the journey. The cooking is execrable and the wine abominable. You found some rugs at Kermanshâh? It is noted for its fine antiques."

"I only remained there a short time. I found

a few rare specimens there, and at Hamadân, as well as some beautifully embroidered ancient *nacsh*. But the one rug I went in search of was gone."

"Ah! I am sorry. And the collection at Algiers you also failed to secure. During twelve years' experience I have never seen its equal. Fine specimens are becoming scarcer day by day."

"Yes. But I found the rug I was looking for at Teherân."

"It was a rare Kurdistân or Senna; or possibly an antique Kermanshâh?"

"It is a large and perfect antique silk Kermanshâh, eight by ten. If you care to see it, it is in my rooms, rolled in its leathern case."

"*Sapristi!* you have not stated the price for which you will part with it! I will double the original price, whatever it was, and give you the superb collection of prayers at the sum it cost!"

"It may be two years, it may be longer—one must wait for such things—but so soon as

I have duplicated the collection which I regret escaped Monsieur, depend upon it he will hear from me. I shall not forget his message at Teherân, nor to Hooseïne when I pass through Kangawar. Ah ! were I Monsieur, and could I recall my youth, I should have tarried longer at Kangawar."

"But we shall meet the sweet divinities again, let us trust, in the regions of the blest ; and had I tarried, the rug might now be hanging in the shrine at Mâshed."

"Monsieur speaks truly. His generosity I shall always remember, and his souvenir is deeply engraven on my heart. The Burmah ruby which he admired—a pomegranate in the garden of precious stones—I will deem it a favor if he will accept as a memento ; its color and its fire he will vainly seek to equal," were the farewell words of the Hadji, whose hand I pressed fervently as the train drew out of Constantinople, bound for Paris.

It is a fortunate dispensation that the hardships and vexations of travel are forgotten, and

that only its fragrant memories remain. All these the gorgeous hanging in my hall recalls with redoubled emphasis and charm, as, with every change of light and shade, its expression varies like a living thing. For, ever, when I contemplate its wondrous beauty, it reflects, as by a mirage, a hundred images of a distant land—the picturesque cavalcade of the caravan, the startled antelopes fleeing across the sands, the splendors of mosque and minaret and sacred shrine, the bulbul's song in the *chenârs*, the ecstatic chant of the muezzin from the parapet on high.

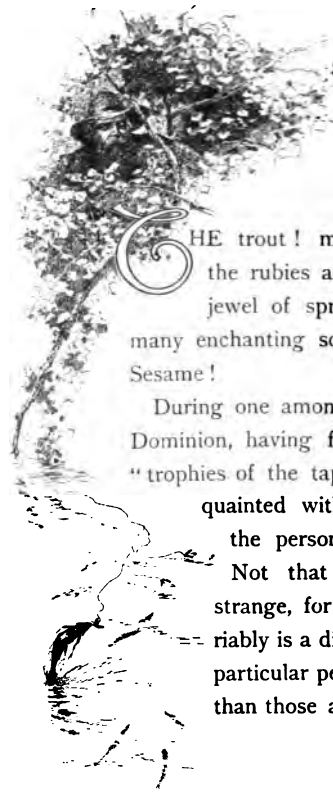
The rug I secured ; the beauteous odalisque with the velvet eyes I could not attain—one can not have all. Besides, admitting it were possible to have obtained her, what could I have done with her ? The rug was too tender and precious for even a *houri* to repose upon ; and how could I have guarded her without a Nubian seneschal ? As for giving her away, the idea were too preposterous to entertain for an instant. During the lapse of time since I

first beheld her, unlike the rug, she must perforce have submitted to the irremeable fate of most terrestrial things, and witnessed her beauty wane. I shall alway associate her with the rug, and see her with the inward eye, reclining upon silken cushions, lute in hand, in the blaze of her voluptuous beauty, her glorious contralto voice passionately interpreting a *ghazâl* of Hafiz. There may be more beautiful carpets and houris in the palaces of the Paradise of the Prophet, but I have my doubts; and, perhaps, as the *dellâl* said, in possessing The Golden Rug I have secured, as nearly as it is possible to secure, the talisman of Oromanes.

Great indeed is Allah!



WARDERS OF THE WOODS.



No sound was heard except,
from far away,
The ringing of the wit-
wall's shrilly laughter,
Or, now and then, the chat-
ter of the jay,
That Echo murmured
after. HOOD,
The Haunted House.

THE trout ! my speckled friend, he of
the rubies and chrysoberyls, the living
jewel of spring-fed waters — to how
many enchanting scenes is he not the Open
Sesame !

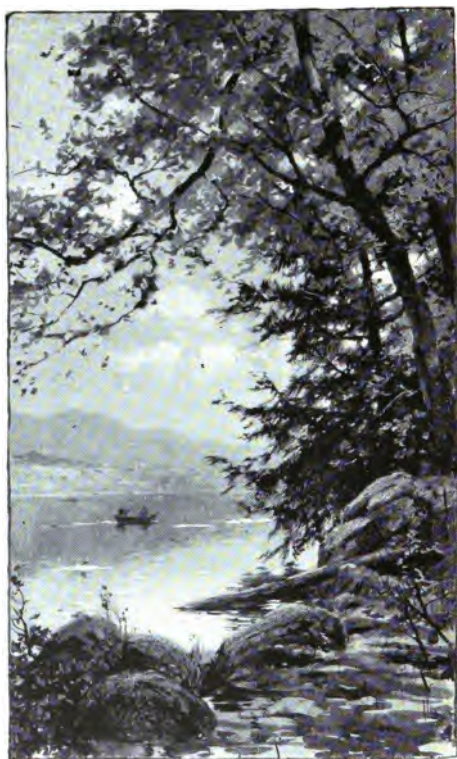
During one among many excursions to the
Dominion, having for its object the spotted
"trophies of the tapering line," I became ac-
quainted with a singular character in
the person of the local fisherman.
Not that this was of itself at all
strange, for the local fisherman inva-
riably is a distinct character ; but this
particular personage was more striking
than those among the fraternity I had

usually met—a presence standing out plainly as the pines against the evening sky. I had become familiar with so many phases of this versatile genius, that, on visiting a new locality, it was a subject of no little interest to picture the guise in which he would next present himself. One never meets him twice alike, but one is certain to find him an active looker-on wherever a fringe of alders is swaying over the trout-stream. I had learned to expect him just as surely as the stereotyped statement which greets the angler, that if he had only come three or five or ten years before, he would have caught more trout in an hour than he could carry. From experience I had found it an advantage to cultivate the *locum tenens*. There are many benefits to be derived from him: he is an adept at the paddle; he is familiar with the waters; the woods are an open book to him; there is not a short cut or turn he does not know by heart. Desirable he is, I had learned; but not alway to be secured by the first cast of proffered friendship, I also discovered.

I was wondering, accordingly, what manner of man my next mentor would be, on arriving one pleasant summer's day in a retired hamlet in Grey County. Here a neat-looking inn near a beautiful small lake seemed to offer more inducements than are usually to be met with in the average Canadian hostelry that advertises to provide for the entertainment of man and beast. The tap was fresh, and the table I found as conducive to a contented state of mind as the sparkling waters of the lake's outlet were soothing to contemplate in their rapid sweep almost past the very door of the inn. "An angler's Elysium," I thought to myself, providing the lake sustains its reputation, and the fish are willing to listen to flattery.

"The boy would man the canoe," the landlord paradoxically observed, when arising from the dinner-table we started out for the lake which, nearly encircled by wood-girt shores and shimmering in the sunshine of a bland June afternoon, looked like a signet set in emeralds. A more beautiful sheet of water

THE NEW YORK
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angler's eye never rested upon. Pure as the ether, transparent as plate-glass, one could count every pebble at the bottom, thirty feet below.

I had been casting but a few minutes in an inviting cove, when, noticing a swell on the previously unruffled surface, I intuitively turned round, to perceive that I was no longer alone. A canoe, riding low in the water, with a solitary occupant, had appeared unobserved; it had glided rather than approached, noiselessly and stealthily, like the flight of an owl.

Surely I was not mistaken—my piscatory guide, philosopher and friend!

"A large mornin' to you, stranger; I seed you a-fishin' round the bend, and it struck me I'd take a look and see what you coaxes 'em with."

The speaker was a tall, well-knit man of about fifty, the most striking part of whose presence was his superb flowing rufous beard. His face was bronzed with the sun's reflection on many a trout-stream, and his small, sharp

eyes were expressive of much cunning. I called to mind a fox at once, on looking at him and considering his crafty approach. His rod reposed at his side, and a number of fine trout flashed from the bottom of his canoe.

"You're too late in the day to have much of a haul; you wants to try for 'em early of a mornin'. They doesn't bite well day-times, lessen its cloudy or it's early in the spring. Most on 'em I catched with a fly; some o' the little 'uns I got down to the outlet, after they quit a-bitin' up here."

And while he spoke there was a nervous twitching of his right eyelid. I extended him my flask, and, passing the time of day, took occasion to examine his catch. He had between two and three dozen very dark-colored, brilliantly marked fish, several of which would scale close to three pounds. There were no traces of the gill-net on his captives. Neither had they been taken on a night-line; the gills of the large ones were a bright vermillion, denoting conclusively that they had been

freshly caught. His cast consisted of a large, coarsely tied, well-whipped scarlet fly. The gut to which it was attached looked rotten, and was badly frayed. It might possibly hold a heavy fish on a springy piece of lance-wood, providing a fish could be induced to rise to the entomological apparition which the fly represented. But it appeared hardly stout enough to withstand the resistance of a big trout for a terminal fixture to the ponderous *bâton* that served him for a rod. His eyelid hitched again when I examined his insidious lure.

There was no sign of a landing-net in his canoe. I became convinced he was foxy both in his nature and his looks.

He made his own flies, he said. "There was heaps o' trout in the lake, if a feller could only coax 'em. If I wanted any he could let me have some beauties; he had plenty in his 'well' up to the shanty."

A few minutes later his form was obscured by the distance, as his obedient craft sped si-

lently up the lake under the subtile stroke of his paddle.

An afternoon's diligent work on my part resulted in but a small catch, and I returned to the inn at dusk with a light basket, while I elegized :

Full many a fish of speckled ray serene
The lake's transparent depths and shallows bear ;
Full many a trout is born to feast unseen,
And guard his rubies in his watery lair.

I learned subsequently from the landlord that my foxy-looking acquaintance, whose name was Miles, combined the accomplishments of a naturalist and an angler. " He possessed a great number of native birds, in the mounting of which he was an adept, and his success in fishing was proverbial. He fished all the neighboring waters : the Beaver River, the lake, the outlet, the mill-pond below, and the stream flowing from the pond. He liked his glass of 'alf-and-'alf, and he ought to be around soon."

Of course, I should ply him assiduously, and have him do duty with the paddle ; his mag-

nificent beard might prove a stimulus to the fish which apparently required an introduction to strangers. He happened in later during the evening, and I found him a capital story-teller. Under the influence of the 'alf-and-'alf he became still more expansive, while the twitching of his right eyelid was almost constant during his accounts of the monsters he had brought to basket in the lake.

"Would he point out the way to piscine favors, the following day?"

"He would like to," winking on setting down his fifth glass, "but he had some sheep-shearin' to do to-morrow and next day, up the road



a piece, and he wouldn't have no time, except-in' may be a few minutes on his way back. Early in the mornin' I might find the big uns a-bitin' near the inlet, if I tried for 'em with a big red fly or a minnow. But in the spring, and through the ice in winter, was the time to make a haul!"

I found some fair sport, ere the sun was high the next morning, at the head of the lake, where a good-sized stream filtered through a dense growth of tamarack and alder into a swamp that, receding from the east shore for a considerable distance, discharged innumerable small springs into the main reservoir. But although I tried with religious persistency a number of flies, including a scarlet-ibis, they failed to call forth anything like the leviathans which had allowed themselves to be persuaded by him of the alder truncheon and flaming beard.

The surface of the water near the inlet was dimpled by rising trout, feasting upon the minute *diptera* that came sailing past with gos-

samer wings and feathery antennæ, utterly unconscious of the story of the spider and the fly. Unless to deceive an occasional youngster, it was useless to try a counterfeit, while even a minnow, and a little black cricket which was floating in swarms on the water, were equally unavailing in their powers of persuasion. It was the "bright fox," that *bête noir* of the angler, upon which the fish were feasting above the ripple of the wave. Every now and then a glittering fin or an investigating nose would break the water's surface as some unwary insect, rising from below, passed to that bourne whence no insect ever returns. But the artificial fly, or anything else attached to the most minute leader, became more and more useless with the advancing hours. One might as well have tossed a bumble-bee to the fastidious epicures.

It was pleasant, nevertheless, to be floating idly on the clear, liquid mirror; to hearken to the harp of the pines; to trace the reflections of the tree-girt shores; to mark the occasional

leap of a feeding fish ; to watch the wheels of a hawk overhead ; to listen to the warblings of innumerable tiny throats ; to note the different hues of the water where the chrysoprase of the shallows merged into the emerald of the deeps ; to yield one's self listlessly to the insinuating charm of the Hour. The spirit of Peace seemed to have chosen this as a temple for her abiding-place ; to have shut out the artificial world from her sanctuary, and left only the world of Nature to steep the senses in a lotus-dream of repose. What though the fish were mute to the overtures of one's reed ?—the very consciousness of living and dreaming and idling in the sunshine was of itself an inspiration. Here were no carking cares, no worldly discords to intrude. Lamartine might have been drifting on another just such a lovely liquid mirror when he heard the voice calling upon Time to "suspend its flight," for the hours "to stay their course."*

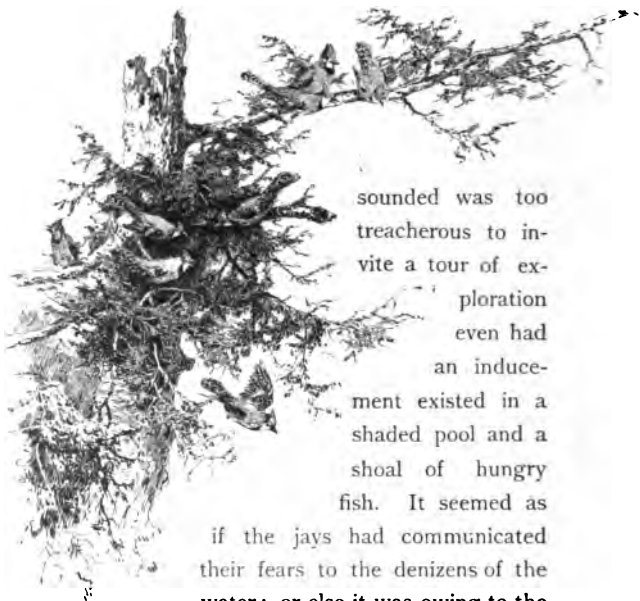
* O temps ! suspends ton vol ! et vous heures propices,

But what, of a sudden, are those shrill sounds from the depths of the swamp, followed in quick succession by others more clamorous still, that come like the driving scud of a March gale on the serenity of a spring landscape, to jar upon the solitude in a very Babel of discordant cries? The noise sounded like the harsh blasts of a bagpipe amid the melody of the forest songsters. There was something which had alarmed the advance-guard of a colony of blue-jays—those warders of the woods—and the danger-signal was being passed rapidly along the line. A fox, probably, out for an airing, or some other wild tenant of Sylva's court, had intruded upon their sacred domain. By following their cries, possibly I might have crept up to a deer which

Suspendez votre cours !
Laissez-nous savourer les rapides délices
Des plus beaux de nos jours.

Assez de malheureux ici-bas vous implorent,
Coulez, coulez pour eux ;
Prenez avec leurs jours les soins qui les dévorent ;
Oublez les heureux.

had come to quench his thirst. But the boggy ground in the direction whence the alarm was



sounded was too treacherous to invite a tour of exploration even had an inducement existed in a shaded pool and a shoal of hungry fish. It seemed as if the jays had communicated their fears to the denizens of the water ; or else it was owing to the withdrawal of the flies ; for soon afterward the trout left off surface feeding altogether. I

made a fair catch, later on, at the outlet ; but on reeling up, my basket, though well filled, owed its weight to numbers rather than to size. Lake-fishing I had alway found provokingly uncertain, a poor respecter of apparently favorable atmospheric conditions ; I might find the trout in better humor the following day.

At night Miles came in for his evening glass, with his glorious beard and blinking eye, holding up for my admiration a half-dozen magnificent fish he had caught " after sundown, on his way home." Beauties they were, nearly of a size, an even thirteen pounds and a quarter on my pocket steelyards ; dark, brilliantly-studded fellows, with vividly-colored fins and black backs, quite dissimilar in shape and markings to the small-headed silvery specimens which had responded to my invitations in the lake.

" They were hungrier nor usual to-night, and took a green caterpillar that was droppin' from the trees along the shore. If I hadn't no use for 'em, he would pack 'em and ship 'em to the city afore he left in the mornin'. To-

morrow he couldn't go a-fishin'; he had promised to repair some fences at the next 'Concession' that would keep him busy for a day or two. I had better try the Beaver or the Mad River; the fish might take hold better in the streams. With the moon risin' so late now, they were beginnin' to feed nights in the lake, and wouldn't be likely to bite well day-times till we had a new moon."

Again, awaiting the pleasure of the fickle flocks of Proteus, was I casting at the head of the lake, my labors rewarded by an occasional investigating fish. Again was I floating idly on the clear, liquid mirror, and enjoying to its utmost the insinuating charm of the Hour, when once more, from the locality whence the clamor had previously proceeded, the warders of the woods filled the solitude with their discordant cries of alarm.

Curious to know the reason, I determined, if possible, to obey the voice crying in the wilderness, and follow the blue-jays. Nothing but a woodcock or ousel could have threaded

[Faint, illegible markings]



the thick screen of alder and tamarack. I could make no headway here, beyond a few rods where the main inlet ceased and came bubbling out of the wet, fern-covered ground. On the other hand, to attempt a passage through the open swamp extending along the east shore, would undoubtedly result in a watery imprisonment not pleasant to contemplate.

On the south side I could effect a landing, and perhaps, by a circuitous route, find firm footing, and so avoid the obstacle to onward progress. I had proceeded but a short distance when my further ingress was barred by another feeder to the swamp, and I found myself on a small track resembling a runway of wild animals that skirted the edge of the spongy ground. Following this with difficulty for quite a distance, plunging over fallen trees and wading through a thicket of jewel-weed and poison-ivy, the path came to an abrupt termination, where a dead tree-trunk, lying across the morass, afforded a natural bridge to the opposite side. Here the tamaracks,

ferns, and climbing plants gave place to the hard timber, and the beauties of the primeval forest were revealed. The jays had ceased their alarum, excepting at intervals an occasional scolding scream from the tree-tops. In the forest recesses there reigned a cathedral quiet save for the subdued melody of the song-birds. Maintaining a southeasterly course, I advanced in the direction whence the alarum had proceeded. For a considerable distance there was a gradual rise to the ground; then it began to slope in the direction I was taking, and ere long I could discern the spires of a multitude of leafless tamaracks spreading out far as the eye could reach in the swamp below.

There were watchers in the woods still, fit guardians of such a ghostly spot; and the jays again awakened the echoes with their piercing cries. A strange fascination existed in the very loneliness of the place, attracting while it repelled, and in which the clamor of the jays appeared to be its Voice speaking to the Solitude. A place meet for evil deeds; a home

for the bat and the owl—forn, savage, desolate, drear.

As I continued to descend, suddenly the joyous sound of running water fell upon the ear, and, like a glow of evening light through the gray waste of skeleton trees, a broad, crystalline stream flashed into view. A heron, startled by my approach, got up heavily from the shore where he was feeding; a flock of wood-ducks rose with clattering wings from the water. Along the shore there were many footprints. I was not the first human visitor in this inland solitude to startle the jays, which continued their warning cries. Not the first, nor the only one at that moment, for, looking up the stream where it widened into a pond surrounded by dead cedars and tamaracks, a canoe was anchored, with a solitary occupant—a familiar-looking figure with a fiery beard:

There, by the side of yonder grizzled tree,
That wreathed its old fantastic roots so high,
His lissome length a-fishing did I see,
Angling upon the stream that murmured by.

The fox was out for his airing, the deer had come to slake his thirst. I waved my flask in the air !

“He would give me a ‘lift’ as soon as he had landed the trout he was playin’. They were bitin’ like a deer-fly, and, with the fixin’s I had, I could catch a boatful afore dark.

“Nobody knew the place but him ; he had found it out when after birds for stuffin’, years ago. There wasn’t no trout in it till he put a pailful o’ little uns in from the lake. The stream formed from springs in the pond and disappeared in the swamp a piece below, so the fish couldn’t get out ; they spawned on the gravel-beds by the main spring at the head o’ the pond.

“I allers fishes with bait, lessen I tries a chub sometimes. I puts on a fly occasionally when I comes in, to make ’em think it’s the fly as takes the big uns. They grow bigger here nor they do in the lake. The blue-jays allers sets up a hollerin’ when I comes.”

My flask, together with my tobacco-pouch

and an extra line I had, were at his disposal. All he enjoined upon me was not to kill the golden *Piscis*. He would paddle down to the end of the stream, and in ten minutes would hide my canoe in the "bush," and get my rod and landing-net.-

The fishing exceeded even my most sanguine expectations; I had merely to extend a large scarlet-ibis to insure an audience.

It was not until the sun sank behind the hoary spires of the tamaracks, and the reflected evening star danced upon the ripple in the deepening dusk, that I reluctantly left the pond, weighted down with the spoils it had yielded. It was the fitful roar of the waterfall, no doubt, or the vague whisper of the night-breeze in the tree-tops, which sounded so eerie as we groped our way through the somber wood; for the jays had long since retired to roost, and, at most, some restless bird might have been murmuring in his sleep.

Miles was even more impressive as a *raconteur* than before, when he lounged into the inn

later than usual, and affected profound surprise on being shown my catch.


“Them’s the finest lot o’ trout I ever seed come out o’ the water!” he exclaimed, stroking his silky beard and blinking his cunning eye. “It takes the fly to coax ’em; and if you hain’t got no objexun, I don’t mind if I takes a turn with you in the mornin’; atwixt the two of us we kin scoop the lake!”



A SHADOW UPON THE POOL.

And there were crystal pools, peopled with fish,
Argent and gold ; and some of Tyrian skin,
Some crimson-barred ; and ever at a wish
They rose obsequious.

HOOD, *The Plea of the
Midsummer Fairies.*



FROM the time that the
rosy apple—if the apple of
our earliest forefather was a
rosy one ; from the time that
the leaves of the *Ficus* fig-
ured so prominently in a
certain primitive garden, it
was ever the thing one was
interdicted from doing which one
most ardently desires to do. It is al-
way the forbidden fruit that is sweetest,
the proscribed water the invalid pines for, the
prohibited flesh-pots the dyspeptic craves.

To this yearning after the forbidden un-
doubtedly may be attributed the prime cause

of that omnipresent individual, the poacher, who in his various moods and tenses frequents every community where the incentive to his vocation exists. He may thrive as a moucher, the bane of the English game-keeper, with his agile lurcher at his heels, ever ready to pounce upon an unsuspecting hare or pheasant; he may eke out a subsistence with the snare and in pouching unlawful game; or he may haunt the preserved trout-stream with the persistency of his participators in illicit sport, the mink and king-fisher.

It was a mystery how Poacher Jack obtained his trout—not so much in the numbers of the fish themselves, for they were abundant in the numerous streams and ponds of the vicinity, as in the unusual size of the speckled captives that fell to his baskets. To be sure, he was the acknowledged crack angler of the neighborhood; he did everything well that he set his mind to do. If a broken fish-rod, lumber-wagon, or a neglected piece of roadway needed

repairing, he was called upon in preference to put it to rights; if a fat sheep were wanted, either for a friend or to appease the appetite of his numerous family, it was promptly forthcoming; if a dish of especially fine trout were desired for some particular occasion, the fish never failed to respond to his summons. He was a general favorite, not only with the trout but the villagers; and although a few among the latter were inclined to look upon him with jealousy, or even distrust, yet his wit was so ready and his knowledge of their own weaknesses so keen, that they wisely deemed discretion the better part of valor in meddling with his affairs. With the fair sex he stood in the highest esteem. He was alway doing them some small favor which cost him little, but that was remembered. It was one of his axioms, if you have the "women-folks" on your side, you are sure to come out with flying colors. So a freshly dressed coarse-wool hanging in the rear of his house, or a basket of pound-trout out of season in his possession, were passed

by as a matter concerning no one but himself. A jack of all trades, fishing was his overpowering passion. He would leave the harvest-field, mill, or workshop at any time, if the weather was only promising for his favorite pastime ; nothing could keep him from his accustomed haunts.

I used to have him accompany me on my angling expeditions in the neighborhood. In paddling a boat he was a graduate of the highest honors. Skimming the length of a pond, he never once lifted his paddle ; he used it as a duck would its web—silently, softly, powerfully. If there was a big rise ahead, he knew the precise moment to stop, to take advantage of it, without instruction or without alarming the game. He possessed, moreover, a never-failing flow of humor, and was eminently Tapleyan in his views of things. If your luck were poor, he had a pleasant way of flattering you into the belief that, under the circumstances, you had made a most creditable showing. His twinkling eye was jollity itself, and placidity

beamed from every seam of his weather-beaten face.

In the full-blown flower of lusty health and physical manhood he lived, and was the visitor's guiding-star in the little village of Middleton, famous from time immemorial for its trout-ponds—a quaint, old-fashioned Canadian hamlet perched upon a hill, with creaking weather-vanes, and clouds of martins chattering amid the eaves; with rambling, grass-grown streets, and tumbling dwellings tintured with a flavor of the long-ago. A listless place of Drowsyhead it is:

A place for idle eyes and ears ;
A cobwebbed nook of dreams ;
Left by the stream whose name is years
The stranded village seems.

A large mill-pond reflects the *cumuli* clouds of June, and mirrors the murmuring pines of a breezy hill-side within a stone's-throw of the village church. But it was not here that Jack's rod of empire swayed. From what diaphanous depths he lured the darlings of the water, was

a problem more difficult of solution than the precise pastures in which he occasionally enacted the *rôle* of a nocturnal Menalcas. When asked where he caught his fish, he invariably replied, "In the big swamp"—a locality rarely visited, owing to the almost impenetrable thicket and the treacherous nature of the ground. A purling trout-stream, translucent as a beryl, that flowed through a swamp, crossed the high-road on its winding way, several miles from the village; and, though soon hidden amid the dense umbrage of the cedars and undergrowth, it was known to be prolific of heavy fish. But a few venturesome anglers who had given it several trials met with only moderate success; and Jack's version, like his sheep-stories, was considered unsatisfactory, notwithstanding he had been seen repeatedly coming laden with his spotted trophies from this direction.

It was not until a third visit to Middleton that the mystery of his big baskets was made plain to me—when the magic door was un-



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locked behind which was treasured the ripe experience of years. We were fishing one day in the Dorland Pond, a well-tenanted water, where, by using a fine leader and midge-flies, one was sure, in sunshine or in shadow, of a large catch of small fish in the weed-beds toward shore. A vast swarm of flies was perpetually hovering over the glassy surface, the insect ranks augmented momentarily by fresh recruits, which, bursting the pupa, emerged as radiant imago, to become the prey of the hungry fish and an equally eager mob of feathered assassins—the cedar-birds, which hung suspended over the water to dispute the spoils with the trout. Everywhere the surface was in a tremble of rings and resonant with the slapping of innumerable finny tails, as the fish darted upward, to dive down again with the coveted morsels to the shelter of the weeds. The gormandizing fish rose at every cast, two and sometimes three fastening on at a time. Jack sat silently watching the sport and lazily puffing his pipe.

“ If them little uns you’re a-haulin’ in weighed a pound or two apiece, you wouldn’t like it, I suppose? I’ll show you some fishin’ that’ll beat your flyin’ all holler, if you swear you’ll never let out on me!”

“ Agreed! my persuasive friend. Here’s strict secrecy, and hoping the price in mutton may continue firm.”

“ You’ll need a pole with more muscle than that, though. A big trout smashed mine all to pieces the other day, and another snapped my line like a pipe-stem. They’re the awfulest trout you ever see in the Dunton Pond—draw a feller all round when they get started; it takes a cast-iron ox-chain to hold ’em.”

There is always a fascination in listening to a big fish-story, especially when the fish are of a titled family.

“ But I supposed the Dunton Pond was private property, and you were debarred from its privileges.”

“ Jus’ so! You see, the capt’in, him and me had a fallin’ out. I used to angle there occa-

sionally, and I never once hogged on 'im. Some poachers stole in at night, tore the padlocks off his boat and turned the pond upside down, and he laid it all to me. I've allers go to take the blame! If any poachin's a-goin' on, it's me; if a lamb's been killed by somebody else's dog, or a sheep's died of old age, I've had a hand in it certain. But I'll be even with 'im. I've poached more out of his pond this year than I ever caught out of it afore altogether. I could put some quicksilver in it and send the dam a-kitin', but I wouldn't serve the trout so mean a trick. Where a man lets me fish, I lets him off easy; but if he goes to clubbin' me off, I'm bound to poach on 'im. To-morrow we'll slip up to the pond, and I'll show you a trick wuth a dozen o' yourn."

"Much as I appreciate your artistic paddling, the fact that I have permission to fish in the pond fortunately renders it unnecessary for me to play the poacher. I shall not fail, however, to profit by your information, and again examine its capacities for myself to-morrow."

“As you like ; but you'll find you can't tickle 'em so handy. They need a power o' ticklin' ; no use o' flyin' it there !”

The long pond, a water-wilderness of submerged stumps and snags, lies isolated in a hollow. It was a hot, sleepy day, with no breeze to fan the water, that shone lustrous as a sheet of burnished steel, when I was seated in a boat waving an eight-ounce wand. With but poor results in quantity, but excellent in quality, I had been pitching two big, gaudy flies for some time. The trout were not in the humor, and objected to leave their hiding-places. By casting a long line and allowing the flies to sink deeply, and then reeling in quickly, an occasional fish would satisfy his curiosity by fastening if a snag did not tie up the leader. But this style of fishing, and the loss of several flies, soon became tedious.

The cool shade of the pines on the farther shore looked inviting for a *siesta* ; I would give the fish a chance to finish their afternoon nap undisturbed, and wait until the western bank

cast a shadow upon the pond. So a pipe was lighted and a seat in the boat exchanged for a couch on the grass. There was no lack of company here. If the shy tenants of the water were reserved, their fellow-creatures of the earth and air were draining the fullest measure of delight from the golden chalice of the day. Clear as the tinkling of a silver bell the hymn of the thrush floated from the depths of the woods; the drowsy hum of unseen insects rose and fell in the air overhead; a locust "shrilled his song of heat"; a white-throated and a white-crowned sparrow, too, joined by turns exultingly in the concord; while the kingfisher's clarion announced that his click-reel was in working order, and he was about starting forth upon a poaching expedition of one.

I was fast being soothed into slumber, when, suddenly, Nature's many voices ceased; its clock appeared to stop its ticking. The birds suspended their singing; the locust broke off his monotonous refrain; and a mink, emboldened by seasons of gorging unseasonable

game, who had been fearlessly trimming his whiskers, whisked along the bank to disappear in the bowels of the earth. Assuredly there must be a reason for all this ; Nature's pulse does not cease beating without a cause.

What is the coming event that is casting its shadow before ?

Nothing could be discerned which could have produced the sudden silence. There was no circling hawk or eagle ready to pounce upon bird or beast. Soon, however, there was a rustling in the bushes a few rods to my right, when the source of the hush upon Nature was revealed. Pausing amid the undergrowth, and cautiously peering through the branches, was a familiar human figure. There was no mistaking the leather-colored blouse and overalls, the short, black pipe, and cat-like tread, as the man and his long rod appeared in view and cast a shadow upon the pool. I could watch him unobserved from my place of concealment ; he could neither see me nor the boat that was drawn close to shore. Again he eagerly

scanned the surroundings, when, thrusting his hand into the bag which hung suspended in place of a basket, he drew forth a good-sized, wide-necked bottle.

“Aha! he’s going to put a familiar stanza into practice, and drink the health of the fish”:

How doth the gentle fisherman improve each shining
hour,
By gathering troutlings all the day whene’er he has
the power;
How busily he throws his line, how neatly spreads his
fly,
How thirstily he takes his drink whenever he is dry!

I was reckoning without my crafty host.

Out of the bottle he drew another smaller vessel, fingering it as tenderly as if it contained attar of roses. I could see him shake out a portion of the larger bottle, on which he poured some of the liquid the smaller one contained.

A puff of wind curled the surface of the water.

I fancied I could detect a peculiar, subtle, aromatic odor on his pouring out the liquid, like the strong scent of the *Santalum*, or burning incense. This accomplished, he stepped

out, with the litheness of an otter, upon a fallen tree-trunk extending half across the pond, scattering a portion of the contents of his hand into the water. Almost instantly there was a surge upon the surface, followed in quick succession by a series of vermilion flashes where a shoal of heavy trout threw themselves out of the pool. It was as if his rod were a lamp of Aladdin, and the fish were lured by its light.

I could see them cleaving the crystalline depths in their charge from every direction, like hounds hot upon the scent of the game. What was the mystic potion he possessed, to exercise such a spell over the wary tenants of the pond, which but an hour before seemed imprisoned in their watery fastness? This, then, was the trick he spoke of; this the explication of his big baskets! He was baiting a certain pool with some secret bait known only to himself, and the moths were already flocking in swarms round the candle. A trout-charmer! a necromancer of fishes! a backwoods Zanoni, was this lover of surreptitious fins and fleeces!



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Soon his long, stiff rod was unslung from his shoulder, his hook baited with a portion of the bait he had scattered, when immediately there was a rush from below, and a large trout was fast on the barbed steel. His magic rod was guileless of reel; he lifted him out before he had a chance to turn to the bottom. Another one, larger than the first, was soon floundering in his bag. He carefully examined his tackle, baited afresh, and rapidly repeated the success of his previous casts.

At that rate he would fill a bushel-basket within an hour. I became alarmed for the fish and my evening chances. To see the largest fish of the pond answering to his simple beck and call, was more than human sufferance could passively endure. I pushed out in the boat, to see him turn round savagely, when, recognizing me, he resumed his wonted placid expression.



"Puttin' some salt on their tails, you see!"

"Yea, verily, so I do see, my mysterious friend."

And I extended my flies without a second's loss of time. A small fish took the tail fly at the third cast; and another came up to look at it, but would not fasten, after three or four more invitations. It was evident my medicine was not to their liking; they would rather swallow Jack's purgatives than take my sugar-coated pills.

"Need a heap o' ticklin', these trout; no use o' flyin' it here!"

And with this his hook again fell upon the surface to disappear down a pair of monstrous jaws.

"If your seductive manipulations extend to pastures as they do to waters, Middleton mutton must be at a heavy premium, my skillful brother of the hazel flail. Where did you discover your panacea for spangled shyness; and what subtle scent is it that draws the fish so

wonderfully, my poaching *confrère* of the rod and line?"

He tendered me the mysterious bottle. It was half filled with what looked like balls of kneaded yellow paste. The strong odor I had noticed before was almost overpowering on placing the smaller vial to my nostrils.

"That's my secret," he said, anticipating my inquiry. "It took me a week to bait this here hole. It's the smell as draws 'em. If they quit a-bitin', all I got to do is to toss 'em a little fresh bait, and I can call 'em like a flock o' chickens. That's how I get my big ketches; it's the whoppers it draws. Soon's I've got my ketch, I slip into the village by the back way, so they'll think I've come from the swamp, don't ye see?"

"Yes, they've ketched me a-fishin' here, but I never lets 'em see my ketch; and I begin fishin' with a worm, and they stop bitin' pretty much, so they don't suspect nothin'. I've had to hide my ketch in the bush, and come back for 'em after dark. If the capt'in ketches me,

he can't do nothin'. I'm on the side o' the pond the miller owns; he's a friend o' mine, and no fisher, and don't care how many I ketch, and the capt'in and him don't hitch."

What was I to do? It yet lacked several hours of evening when I could count upon a possible rise to the fly. Always extremely capricious in their feeding, the fish might even refuse to rise at all. Were it not wiser to seize the passing hour? The opportunity might never present itself again. Already had I returned from the pond with empty creel, and my stay in Middleton was fast drawing to a close. Was it the passing breeze that bore me the echo of the sentiment that has gone reverberating down the ages from time immemorial:

The season of the rose is brief, make haste to pluck
your posies;
Another day you'll chance to find bare thorns where
bloomed the roses!

The temptation was a great one. Here was a pond full of wild trout, noted as the largest and finest in the county, notoriously shy of

hook and line, and yet ready to come at call. By using the scented bait I should be guilty not only of an underhanded mode of fishing, but I should be abusing the privilege extended me of fishing in the pond. I was in a quandary. The spirit, though sorely tried, was willing to resist ; but the sight of another mottled monarch tugging at Jack's rod rendered the flesh weak.

Surely a trout is a trout, so long as he is taken in season and with hook and line. I would try the insidious lure, score just an even dozen, and then await the evening rise. As before, the fish seemed under some potent spell, a dozen at each cast struggling for the privilege of seizing the proffered bait. The leviathans of the pond that were wont to show themselves only on the spawning-beds ; the wary patriarchs of the deepest pools ; the crimson foxes of the water, that the wiles of the angler were ordinarily powerless to charm, were most eager for the coveted prize. It made no difference if a hooked fish broke

loose; there were plenty only too anxious to take its place. I could see the finny giants swimming round and round in graceful circles, amid the roots and logs of the pool. Our rods were kept in a constant curve, and in less than half an hour an eighteen-pound basket cried, "Hold! enough!" with two fish of the dozen to spare. I could afford to wait for the evening shadows, which in due time came stealing over the pond.

The tender plaint of the whip-poor-will fell upon the tranquil air, and a hermit-thrush trilled his sacred vesper hymn.

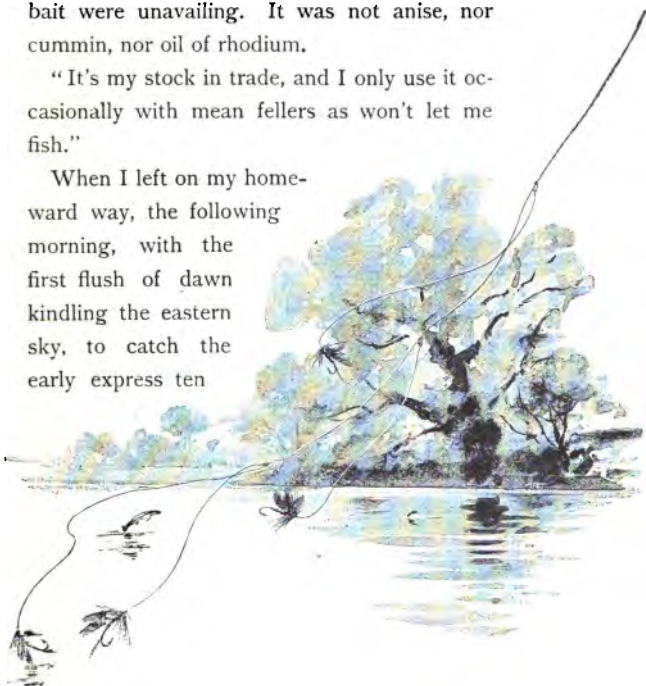
The bats and night-hawks in scores came out from their retreats, wheeling in undulating flight over the water. There were plenty of heavy fish left to share the millers with their feathered banqueters, when the waning light of day brought on a change of appetite, and a swarm of nocturnal insects. By nine I had more than doubled my previous catch, seconded by the "Coachman" and "Professor"; and, gathering the spoils, we turned our backs upon

the pond, which looked wan and spectral in the dim light of a young August moon.

We came in the "back way" that night, and our catch was the talk of the village. I vowed strict secrecy to Jack, who packed the fish, but all my efforts to discover the magic bait were unavailing. It was not anise, nor cummin, nor oil of rhodium.

"It's my stock in trade, and I only use it occasionally with mean fellers as won't let me fish."

When I left on my homeward way, the following morning, with the first flush of dawn kindling the eastern sky, to catch the early express ten



miles distant. Jack was on hand to drink a parting health. His pouch and rod were slung over his brawny shoulders, and a merry twinkle was in his eye on responding to the landlord's interrogation :

"I'm jest a-goin' to ride on a piece with my Yankee friend—him as 'flies' it—and I'm a-thinkin' I'll be takin' another turn at the swamp to-day."

Eheu fugaces! This was years ago, and years have wrought their changes in the hamlet of Middleton. The martins cease not to chatter amid its eaves, and the large mill-pond yet reflects the murmurous pines of the neighboring hill-side. But on my last visit, long before climbing the steep ascent that leads to the sleepy village, I became conscious in some vague, half-defined way, that I should not find Jack ready to receive me as of yore. The great rock-elm, that cast its shade far along the dusty highway, had been riven by lightning; the inn had burned down; and the

trout-stream, though sparkling and singing on its shallows, had shrunk to half its accustomed size. Heavy spring freshets, sweeping from the uplands, had carried off the dams in all the neighboring ponds. And, alas ! like them, Jack, too, had passed away.

The village seemed estranged and altered with the lapse of time, as if it were another village than the one I knew when he was there. I attempted but one essay on the pond where we made our famous catch. To the visual sense the scene remained unchanged. The swallows and dragon-flies were still chasing their reflections in the water, and the self-same trees were imaged upon the clear mirror of the hollow. The dam had been repaired, the mill-wheel droned, and in due time the evening shadows came stealing over the surface. From the thicket's screen the whip-poor-will launched his twilight song, and the bats and night-hawks still wheeled on fitful, wavering wing. The mist-wreaths rose gray and ghostly amid the gathering gloom, while dimly from

the arc of the August sky a faint moon's crescent shed its pallor over the pond. But its glory—its large trout—had departed when the shadow of Jack's rod no longer fell upon the pool. Was it his requiem that the hoarse chorus of the *Rana* tribe was solemnly chanting, and his *requiescat* that an owl was sounding from the shades of the slumberous wood?



THE SILVER FOX OF HUNT'S HOLLOW:
AN IDYL OF THE UPPER GENESEE.

The phantom of a cup that comes and goes.

TENNYSON—*The Holy Grail.*

Loecher fanden sich hier, und Hoehlen mit vielerlei
Gaengen,

Eng und lang, und mancherlei Thueren zum Oeffnen
und Schliessen.



Caves here
abounded, and dens
with many an exit,
Narrow and long, and
many a door to open and fasten.

GOETHE—*Reineke Fuchs.*

WANDERER from the hills, starting
as a trout-stream at its fountain-head in
northern Pennsylvania, and receiving
the sparkling waters of many a trib-

utary on its way, the Genesee River flows through the counties of Allegany, Livingston, and Monroe, in the State of New York, until, turning the mill-wheels and leaping the twin falls of Rochester, it finally discharges into Lake Ontario. In all its varied journeyings amid woodland, farmstead, and valley, through regions rendered historical by the red-man, past spots of surpassing pastoral loveliness, including its traverse through the fertile flats of Livingston and southern Monroe—the garden of the Empire State—it reveals no such picturesque beauty as, when leaving its tranquil upper level, it suddenly plunges between the High Banks into the great gorge below Portage in its three precipitous descents.

Nor is the surrounding region, the rolling wooded landscape and extended panorama of hill and dale which environs the upper river, less lacking in a romantic charm of its own. Remote from the highway and the increasing inroads of civilization, the wild life of the woods and unrestrained Nature yet remains

comparatively unscathed. Here the great white hare abounds, the ruffed grouse beats his reveille, and Reynard roams his native hills. So much, *à vol d'oiseau*, for the chosen haunt of the subject of my sketch. To him who knows the region in all its changing phases, and is conversant with the furtive life that lurks within its penetralia, it were unnecessary to emphasize its charms. To those who know it not, even though his silhouette be but a dim semblance measuring the beauty of him who casts it, let its presiding genius be the courier, he of the argent coat and foot-step fleet—the Silver Fox of Hunt's Hollow!

Assuredly, my sweetheart never appeared so lovely as when, listening to a recital of the incidents attendant on an autumnal outing, I mentioned having met with a silver fox. Was it because she was conscious of looking still more bewitching in soft, warm furs than in cool, white lawn, that, with eyes agleam and cheeks aglow, she exclaimed: "Really and truly, a silver fox, a veritable genuine silver-

gray? Oh, I'd give the world for him if you were his captor! Only think what a set of furs he would make! Silver-fox furs, you know, are a talisman; and she who wears them, according to the Russian belief, can never grow old."

"Would you have me chase the rainbow, seek the philosopher's stone, or start on the quest of the Holy Grail? Any of these were fully as easy to compass as to hold the beautiful brush that steadies the Silver Fox of Hunt's Hollow."

"Can you not at least try—for *me*?"

"Others have longed for his magnificent coat; for years others have essayed to break the spell he holds. But the hounds return without the quarry, and the hunters give up in despair after weary days of following his elusive shadow. Of what avail to pursue the unattainable—an *ignis-fatuus* that only lures to mislead?"

"Are there not traps and snares and poisoned baits and pitfalls?"

“But he is a phantom, and rides on wings of the wind. Actæon and all his hounds, Diana and all her buskined virgins, could not effect his capture. Futile is every attempt to beguile him. You might as well covet a necklace of the Pleiades.”

It was, however, useless to protest, so sweet my sweetheart's lips, so alluring the love-light of the violets of her eyes; I could but faintly murmur :

In vain are all the charms I can devise :
She hath an art to break them with her eyes.

I must perforce undertake the essay, even though I should prove one more of the number to swell the chorus, “In vain ! in vain !”

Ah, would that the power were mine to depict it to you as it is so vividly pictured to me—the fleet and ever-flitting form flinging the miles so lightly behind, and covering the hills and valleys with easy, tireless stride ! I see him now as distinctly as if it were yesterday, the embodiment of grace and speed, leading the panting train along the labyrinths of his

choice. I hear the music of the pack following in fruitless quest, disappearing in the gullies, rising on the ridges—now faint in the distance, now distinctly heard ; a silver sky above, a silver floor beneath, a silver form speeding ghost-like over the cold, white, glittering expanse.

My acquaintance with "Old Silver"—for such was the name by which he was most familiarly known—occurred while grouse-shooting with a companion in one of the fox's favorite retreats—a dense, large woods at Hunt's Hollow, near the High Banks of the Genesee. It was while partaking of the lunch in a chosen spot, in a glade through which a trout-stream flows, that we caught the baying of a hound remote to the northward. A light breeze was blowing toward us, sifting down the many-colored leaves, when, as the sound gradually drew nearer, suddenly a silvery form sprang upon a log in the stream below.

Pausing to reveal his exquisite contour, and turning his head backward and sideward to

hearken for the approach of his pursuer, he seemed a component part of the sylvan landscape, free and buoyant as the October air itself. Without him, no doubt the scene would have appeared as fair and perfect as many another pageant when the pomp of autumn floods the vales and hill-sides with its glory; *with* him, it possessed a life and movement that nothing, save the glamour of his presence, might convey. For he was the picture; the landscape but the frame. Could Baryé have beheld him as we beheld him, and as I beheld him many a time afterward in the triumph of his flight, it were needless for me to dwell upon his beauty; he would be immortalized in bronze, and stand in place of the Jaguar devouring a Hare, as the type of ferine grace. A few moments after landing from his spring, he trotted leisurely up-stream on the shallows for several rods, leaped up the bank at a bound, and once more took to the stream for a short distance; when, resuming his course on the opposite shore, he disappeared on an

easy canter into the thick beech undergrowth.

A gleam of late autumnal gold fell upon his form as he passed noiselessly from the sun-flecked glade—upon the symmetry of his clean-cut haunches, his lustrous silvern hair, his sharp-pointed, nervous ears, and his long, broad, feathery, silver brush. He might have been the incorporate spirit of the Indian summer which was brooding upon the silent woods; lovely, fleeting, and impalpable as the last lingering October sunbeam—so light, so airy, so imponderable, the rustling autumn breeze, rather than any volition of his own, seemed to impel him on his way.

So unexpected was his presence, so fascinating the grace of his every movement, and so brief the time consumed by his manœuvres, that, even had our guns been within reach, I doubt if it would have availed us. To be confronted unexpectedly by a silver fox and retain one's presence of mind, is not for the novice in vulpine warfare. He was an unusually large

dog-fox, his coat a brilliant glossy black tipped with gray that radiated a metallic sheen in the sun. Apparently he was in the prime of life, and was robed in the full vesture of his winter furs. About ten minutes after his disappearance, a hound who gave evidences of a hard chase, in direct contrast to the object of his pursuit, followed upon his trail, and, after considerable delay in recovering the scent on the banks of the stream, took up the trail again where the fox broke for the cover.

Later, I discovered we were the first to meet with Old Silver since the previous autumn, when he had mysteriously disappeared after his famous run with the Brooks' Grove hounds. His arrival in no less measure than his departure was an enigma. By many he was supposed to have permanently left his terrestrial hunting-grounds. By others he was said to have deserted Livingston for the adjoining county of Allegany, where a price was not set upon his head, and he would not remain in constant dread of his pursuers. As if he cared

for the hounds! Had he not baffled them for years? His last run attested conclusively the soundness of his wind and the fleetness of his stifles. To assert, as some did, that he had exhausted his resources, was equally absurd: could he not turn his foes from the scent at will? Additional age would not impair, but enhance, his cunning. His return, therefore, while welcomed by every one who knew him, was still a puzzle to all, and countless were the surmises as to the true cause of his reappearance.

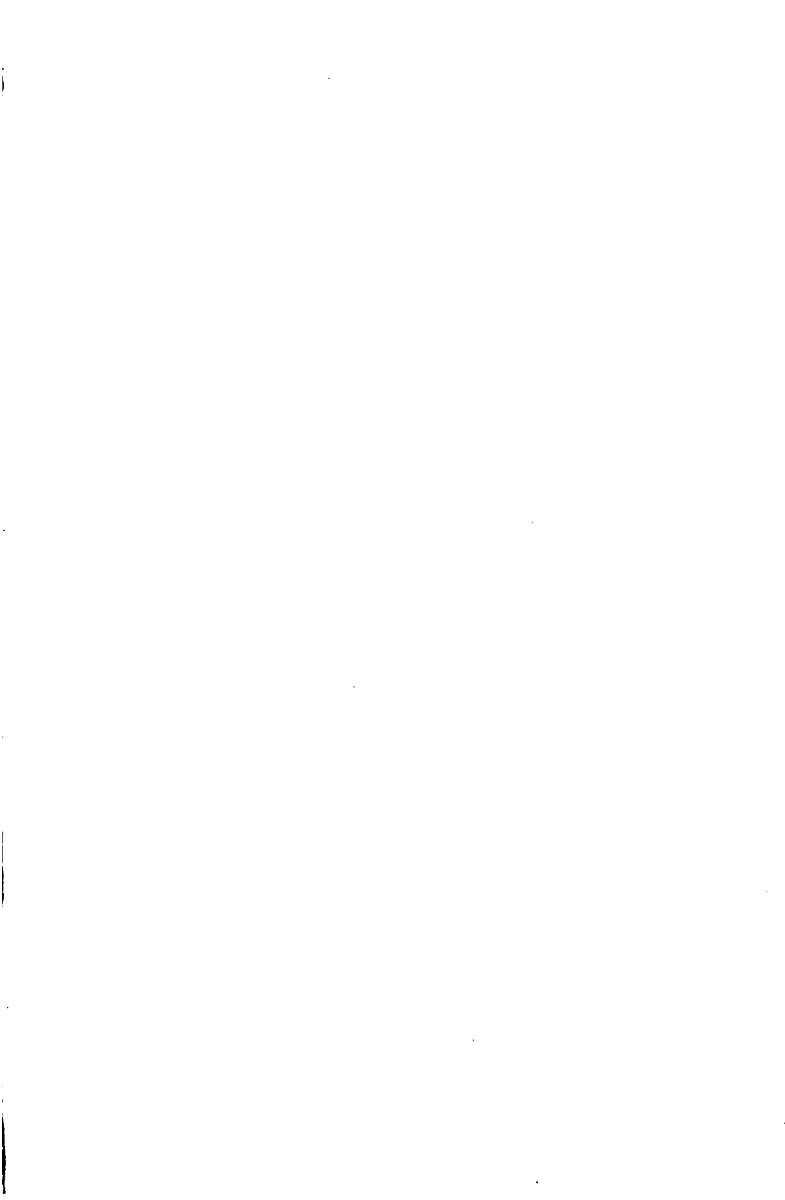
Not that the presence of a silver fox was a rarity, by any means, in the Livingston wilds. Others of his kindred, fleet of foot and skilled in strategy, had made their harbor in the same locality, and for many years had led the chase with varying success. But none of his brethren had haunted the covers with the persistency of Old Silver, whose immunity from capture had passed into a proverb among the inhabitants of the upper Genesee. Like all beautiful things that are difficult to attain, he

was the more coveted from the apparent inutility of pursuit; while naturally alert and cautious to an extreme degree, continued persecution had increased his innate craft, until now he was believed to possess a life inviolable. It was indeed asserted by some that he had roved the Livingston covers since the days of the Indians, by whom he was venerated as the tutelary genius of the groves—disappearing latterly at certain intervals, to resume his abode in his ancestral realms and bid defiance to his foes. Whether verily he possessed a life beyond the power of mortal to assail, and whether his allotted span, like the marvelous measure of his cunning, transcended that of his predaceous brethren, it were premature to disclose. Rather let the whisper of his advancing and the rustle of his retreating footstep, so far as I may trace his mystic outline, voice their own interpretation.

But who might analyze the sentiments that inspired his return? For, surely, some hazy thought at least, some faint mist of reason,

must have passed through his brain ere he forsook his new quarters to return to the old. Did not his phenomenal *finesse*, the charmed existence he had led, the artifice by which he had successfully evaded every attempt at capture, at once presuppose and irrefutably proclaim the possession of a reasoning power? Instinct alone, as opposed to reason, could not account for all—ay, for many of the least of the innumerable wiles by which he still bore the brush that steadied him in his flights.

Was it that the ruffed grouse and hares of his native district were more wary and thus more worthy of his cunning; or did his trained palate discern in them a subtler flavor than those of remoter woodlands? Or was he, perchance, an ardent lover of Nature—that Nature which had been so prodigal to him—and had the extended and varied views through the forest windows of his early home opened to him yet more enticing enchantments of scenery? In the hushed arcades of the hemlocks, where Æolus fingers the leafy keys;





in the profound solitudes of the beech-woods, where the white-throat and hermit sing ; amid the almost impenetrable fastnesses of the fern-plumed swamps, he might dream out his stratagems, and plan new means for outwitting his canine enemies.

How, familiar as he was with every feature of the dreamful landscape, acquainted with every field and swamp and coppice, every grove and glade and thicket, every turn and rapid of the river, every mood of the passing hour as reflected by the sky and atmosphere—how might he forego the beauty of his native haunts? Looking out from his forest stronghold, he might mark how the seasons waxed and waned ; how the sweet spring-tide merged swiftly into summer, and summer, with foot-step fluent as his own, lapsed imperceptibly into autumn ; how autumn's golden pageant gave place in turn to winter's frost and pale, while adding new luster to his velvet coat and a livelier pace to his tireless sinews ; how, finally, the wintry season, waking from its protracted

sleep, yielded to softer skies and balmier airs—the bloom and song and sunshine of spring.

Threading his devious way, he might hear the rivulet's vernal chime, and the awakening chorus of the hylodes quavering over the low-land pools. With the earliest opening blood-root's corol comes the first blue-bird to pipe an April psalm. The bee in the willow catkin, the flicker in the maple-bough, the redwing in the alder-brake, return to rejoice with him. The violet and wind-flower bring the linnet and pewee to lilt their welcome, till all the succeeding woodland choir intone him with their earliest song.

From the edge of the thicket, too, commanding the wide extent of hill and vale and purple upland, how oft has his hazel eye marked the play of the wind-swept shadows, the violet haze, the advancing shower! Rising from his brief repose with the rising mists of morning, he is first to read the auguries of awakening day. Starting upon his foray with the lengthening shadows, he may note every tone

and shade of the twilight and the setting sun ; for at night, when deep sleep has compassed the woodland, and field and pasture are hushed in slumber, begins his day.

Then for him the starry firmament pulsates with intenser splendor to guide him on his rounds, as, glancing upward for a moment, he beholds Endymion's silver horn, and in the glittering constellation Orion, the mighty hunter and his dogs—*Canis major* and *minor*—with *Cygnus* the swan, *Columba* the dove, and *Lepus* the hare, alas ! far beyond his reach. For him *Alcyone* glows, and *Sirius* sparkles in his season, and the diamonds of the *Greater Dipper* flash and blaze. The north star lights its torch, and myriads upon myriads the stars come out upon the *Milky Way*. Even his dusky friend, the crow, becomes radiant with living light, in *Corvus*, resplendent above his head. For him *Hesper* gleams, and the *aurora* streams and scintillates in the polar sky. The *Great Bear* looks down upon his beauty, and the hunter's moon burnishes the silver of

his fur. The glory of the starlit night supernatural! as season after season, the estival and the hyemal hours wear on, to light him on his day.

Considered from a merely physical standpoint, how keen his enjoyment of life! his superb health and intense development of the senses—a development scarce conceivable by man; his acute taste, hearing, smell, and vision, even to the exquisite sensitiveness of the long feelers of the nose which supply him with the sense of touch! His sight, hearing, and smell more especially, so signally vivified as a safeguard from his enemies, what superlative corporal enjoyment must they not afford the possessor! The very consciousness of his speed and endurance must be in itself a source of supreme joy; just as the bird must revel in its song and exult in the force of the wings with which it cleaves the air.

The foe upon the farthest hill-side, the hawk skirting the distant stubble, the bobolink sinking caroling in the grass, his heightened vision may detect in an instant. The pyre of the

autumnal upland, the marvel of the butterfly's unfolding chrysalis, the gossamer's fine-spun tracery, the blossom's wondrous alchemy—all the landscape's hoard of beauty through the seasons' rhythmic cycle—is his to admire. The crash of the falling tree in the farther grove, the song the wind sings to the pines, the lisp of the chickadee and roll-call of the grouse, the low, sonorous undertone of the wood—does he not hear them all, thrice intensified and defined?

And what a world of purely bodily delight lies concentrated in his sense of smell, the most highly organized sense of all—his long, pointed muzzle, with which he parts the air in his flights, and scents the enemy from afar! What untold savors are not wafted to him across the undulations, and borne from every hollow and ravine! The suave, delicious incense of the fields at night, the myriad aromas rising from the summer swamps, what a hive of fragrance must they not hold for him! In his every ramble through the woodland shrine perfume

follows him as a garment. For does not his dainty tread crush out countless odors at every turn—from beds of arbutus and pyrola and ground-pine, and pungent wintergreen and blossoming partridge-vine? The bouquet of the wild grape and spice-wood meets him as he wanders by; the cool effluence of the sweet-fern greets him as he treads the mazy tangle; while on dewy autumn swards his feet are scented by wild pennyroyal, and his flanks brushed by fragrant everlasting in flower.

And what insidious distinction of scents and infinitesimal atoms of scents can enable him to detect, through the flood-tide of odors exhaled by Nature herself, the corporal exhalations of his prey and his foes at a distance—odors inodorous to and inconceivable by man, yet domineering all others to him, himself charged with his own wild, animal emanation?

His heightened senses, his nimble frame, his acute physical organism, seem made for enjoying to its utmost measure the feast which

Nature so lavishly bestows. But it is in winter that his real and active life begins, when, clad in his warm, thick robes, he welcomes the cold and snow, and eagerly looks forward to the excitement of the chase. His extended tramps, as his spoils become more difficult to procure, have put a keener edge upon his staying powers, and added fresh elasticity to his muscles. Fleet indeed must be the hounds to follow him as he leads them "over the hills and far away."

The hilly nature of his haunts would necessarily preclude hunting him other than on foot. If I would win my spurs—and I recalled ecstatically what my sweetheart whispered to me—I must stoop to vulpicide. His lustrous pelt might not be mangled. To entrap or snare him was out of the question; this might be possible with his plebeian brethren, but not with such as he. A well-directed rifle-shot, if he approached within range, alone could secure his lovely pelt in all its matchless splendor.

Should I finally secure the silver-gray? Could I hope to succeed where all others had failed? On the other hand, could an animal endowed even as he was endowed with almost preternatural cunning, cope successfully with the unrelenting efforts of hunters and hounds?

It was no easy matter to start the silver-gray. He was an exception to his tribe in that he had no precisely defined retreat, and that, though found in a certain locality to-day, he was as liable to lead from a locality ten miles in an opposite direction to-morrow. Usually he was met with by accident, the hounds generally deserting the game they were following when they chanced to cross his track. His scent must have been stronger, the hunters in turn readily distinguishing him by his print, larger than that of the red and cross species. The print was easy to distinguish, the mold of the lithe feet upon the snow, even to a peculiarity of one of the toes of the left hind-foot. But the fleet limbs that formed the imprint had ever turned the ravine; and ever

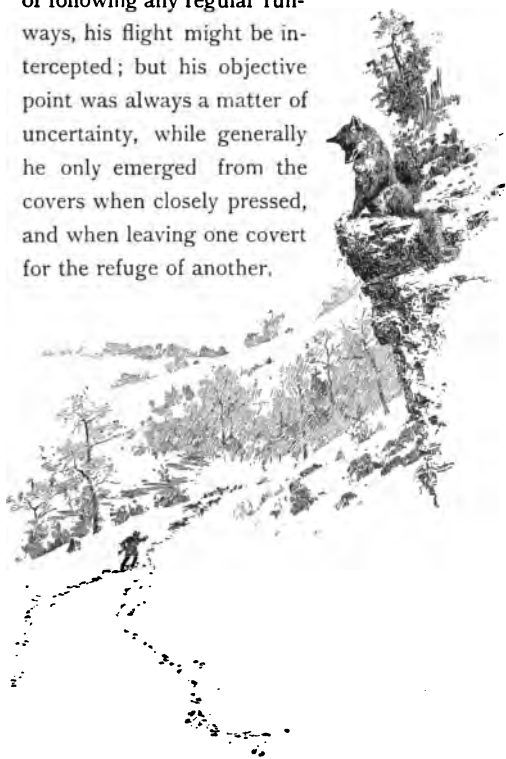
hastening on, his form had long since been obscured by the sheltering shadows.

The points where he had been sprung most frequently were in the Hunt's Hollow woods, three miles distant from the village of Nunda, and a deep gorge near Canandaigua Lake, a few miles from the village of Naples. A light tracking snow had fallen overnight when I started on his quest; but a two days' arduous endeavor proved fruitless in coming upon his trail, while a heavy rain which set in at evening melted the snow and forced us reluctantly to postpone the search. A week later the search was resumed, with a fresh snow-fall. The dark entanglement of the boundless woods surged interminably before me, wave upon wave, mile upon mile to the horizon, their teeming life hidden from human eye within their protecting arms. How great the contrast between their cold, deserted corridors and the sound and movement and ecstasy that peopled their summer halls! when ferns and wild flowers and checkered shadows danced,

and the growing life of the year reveled in very joy of existence. A grim foreboding silence, emphasized by the wan light of the wintry day, now brooded amid their mysterious depths where erst green leaves whispered and song-birds sang. Only the blue-jay's cry and plaint of the wind amid the upper boughs gave a voice to the solitude. What sinuous labyrinths and concealed retreats, what a mighty wall of vantage, did there not arise between the hunter and the silver-gray! No wonder the jay jeered at me from his perch on high, and the intermittent murmur of the boughs seemed a pre-sage of the futility of my quest.

Some time afterward the quarry was sprung from the highlands south of the lake, when, at once leaving his pursuers, he led northwest over the wooded hills and through the ravines to Stony Brook Glen, three miles south of Dansville. Thence he crossed the Erie Railway at a point between Canaseraga and Swains, reaching this by threading the long, dense gully called Poag's Hole. In this gully he habitu-

ally frustrated his pursuers, now by one means, now by another. To attempt to head him off at this point were useless ; his direction hence was only the merest conjecture, until the hounds again took up the scent. Were he in the habit of following any regular runways, his flight might be intercepted ; but his objective point was always a matter of uncertainty, while generally he only emerged from the covers when closely pressed, and when leaving one covert for the refuge of another,



Not alone in his marvelous *finesse* and speed and phenomenal endurance had lain the spell of his charmed career. His immunity from capture consisted equally in his absolute familiarity with every part and portion of his extended circuit, the crypts and cloisters of his sanctuary. It were difficult to say in which of his manifold *ruses* he excelled. His boldest and most brilliant escapes, however, had usually been made toward nightfall in the scarped gullies and gulches leading to the river-bottoms, the hounds being close upon the trail. A favorite *ruse* during a prolonged chase, by which he invariably put the hounds to rout, was to enter the dens of his brethren, and, dislodging the occupant, take his departure while leaving his substitute to lead the chase. This, I fancy, he was wont to do, more as a diversion than otherwise, or possibly as a means of revenging himself upon some of his fellow-freebooters for encroaching upon his preserves. Certainly he required no such adventitious aid in making good his escape; time and time again he had

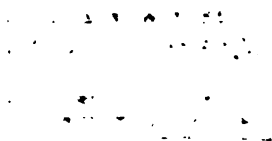
sufficiently proved his ability to shake off the dogs at will. But an occasional prolonged run hardened his sinews and strengthened his wind, and served to preserve, as a latent force, his sustained bursts of speed to call upon during any extraordinary emergency.

The numerous water-courses with which his haunts were intersected were likewise an equally facile means of baffling the hounds whenever he cared to avail himself of such a subterfuge. Not infrequently, when leading a long distance in advance, he would zigzag in his course till he met with a fresh fox-track, following this for quite a distance, until after a series of springs to either side, and thence advancing to the trail again, he would disappear in some occult way. Or sometimes, instigated seemingly by the mere desire of taxing the patience of his pursuers, he would lead them only at half speed, until, quickening his pace in the gloaming, he was enveloped in the environing mantle of the night. His devices varied with different packs

or with different individual hounds ; and it had been repeatedly noted that he so modified or altered the direction of his runs, that it were vain to count upon a precedent as a means of relying upon any direct or well-defined course of his flight. The legend of the were-wolf, who, reversing the order of lycanthropic belief, could transform himself into a man when harried by pursuit, and, meeting the hunters, would divert them from their course, might almost find its parallel in the super-vulpine cunning of the silver-gray. But in war the means are, after all, inconsequent, so long as the victory is secured ; the silver-gray had many strings to his bow, and had always borne off his beautiful brush in triumph.

It was not until afternoon that the pack was again in full cry, as he led merrily over French Hill on his course to the head-waters of Keshqua Creek, at White's Settlement, in the town of Grove. From this point he took a southwesterly course through the swamps and shrubby bottom-lands on Black Creek to the





towns of Birdsall and Allen, thence down again through the town of Grove into the town of Portage, south of Hunt's Hollow, the direction of his route being indicated by the voices of his pursuers. Though the pack was fleet, thus far he seemed to be running mainly for enjoyment, with but few attempts to puzzle the dogs, relying apparently upon his superior speed and stamina to make his escape. The shifting music of the chase, flooding the valleys with its glorious *crescendo*, had already preceded us ere we reached a runway, by a short cut, in the vicinity of the locality where I first saw him the previous autumn. From our elevated position we could just discern his hastening outline—a shadow amid the shadows—as, with a wave of his magnificent brush, he suddenly veered, speeding straight as the line of a bee for the alder-swamp farther on, to disappear in its fastnesses and the gathering dusk. The west-bound express, hurrying by on the main line of the Erie in its relentless pursuit of the hours, sped scarcely faster than the

flight of the fox, as both it and the silver-gray receded from our view.

Once only a shot at distant range had presented itself as he was coursing leisurely along, rounding the edge of a hollow, his nose straight to the wind, and his long brush on a level with his lissome form. The hounds were far in the rear, where he had thrown them from the trail ; he was jogging at his ease, sniffing the exhilarating air. For a moment he paused to impatiently bite off the snow from his feet, and to listen for the movements of his followers. The shot was a long one, and the wind was blowing briskly across the hollow, strongly enough, indeed, to deflect a ball from the object, unless in the most skillful hands. Surely he was even more beautiful, standing amid the wintry scene, than when I first beheld him in the sun-flecked glade, his beautiful color seeming a reflection of his surroundings—the dark shadow of the woods blended with the luminous silver of the snow.

What artifice, what wily stratagem in that

brief interval, was passing through his fertile brain to circumvent the hunters and the hounds? How many long leagues had he not already traversed in the valiant race for his life! and of what heinous offense had he been guilty that he should be hunted, as a felon, to his death? Perhaps, disregarding the instinct of sympathy that for the moment overpowered the infatuation of the chase, I might nevertheless have pressed the trigger of the rifle I had intuitively raised, but for the sudden baying of the on-coming hounds which caused him forthwith to resume his flight.

Nearly a fortnight had already elapsed since I started on my quest, and the object was still far as ever out of reach. Of what nature would his next move be; what would the morrow hold in store? Would he point for the steeper hillsides and denser jungles of the adjoining county, or would he lead, leagues away, to the impassable swamps of the Cohocton Valley? Would he even remain in the swamp overnight, or must the following day



be vainly consumed in his search? Already the white winged messengers were in the air, and within a few hours his elusive footstep would leave no clew upon the snow.

Failing to start him next morning at the place of his disappearance, it was resolved to divide the pack as a means of sooner recovering the scent. Five hours afterward the pack was in full cry

in the deep gully south of Dalton. The fox was heading for the uplands, and by skirting the steep acivity I might come upon him on the farther side. But, circling and doubling upon his tracks, he turned to the opposite flank of the mountain, and, abruptly descending, was heading for the thick tamarack-swamp, two miles away, ere the hounds had recovered the scent. Here his pursuers were put to task anew, and a long delay ensued by his manœuvres amid the windings of Keshequa Creek. A thrilling sight it was—the shifting pageant of the chase over the ermine floor, on the frost-bound, sparkling wintry day, the fast-flying form of the fox traced clearly against the evergreens of the swamp beyond.

Again, to take his bounding life seemed like wanton sacrilege. For, what crime had he committed that his life should pay the penalty? His rufous relatives it was who invaded the barn-yards, who plotted the destruction of the feathered flocks, and who grew bold

and sleek through illegitimate spoils. So far as he was concerned, the poultry might roost secure in the farmsteads; his dainty palate craved only a taste for the wild, the legitimate prey which Nature had allotted him as a tithe. To place the true arch-enemy of the barn-yard's peace, it was but necessary to view the dens of his smaller congeners, strewn with tattered plumage and grizzly with bleaching bones. Upon them, and not on him, should vengeance fall! Coming and going where he listed, here one day and there another, ranging the wide circuit of the covers as his whim or the prevalence of game led him, the woods proper were his only hunting-grounds, and game his main subsistence.

Exultant in his *ruse* and fleetness and strength, in the super-development of every bodily sense, in the intimate knowledge of the arcana of his wide demesne, should he not be permitted to enjoy inalienably his natural dower and tenure, the untrammelled freedom of his wild-wood home? With him, their rightful

heritor, I must ever afterward associate his chosen haunts; while every bird and beast that was familiar with his presence must long for his wondrous grace and beauty. As well fell some immemorial elm whose verdurous umbrage cools the heated croft, and whose grateful canopy the panting flocks are wont to seek for shade. And to what end must he thus be murderously cut down in his career?—a feminine whim; the mere caprice of a woman who coveted his lovely fur! Ah, the witchery of lovely woman's smile!

Overarched and hemmed in by hemlocks, tamaracks, and the rife growth of moisture, the swamp was his favorite summer retreat, with every recess of which he was as familiar as the bittern with the ooze, the swallow with the sky. Then, when the uplands lie quivering in noonday glare, and the grasshopper's burden smites the arid fields, he turns to its refreshing gloom. The pewee knows him and flutes his recognition; the owl echoes his prowling footfall; the veery salutes him as he

passes by. The fresh stream laves his flanks and lulls him with its somnolent song. For him the honeysuckle and apios exhale their fragrance, while his foot sinks into the soft cushion of the sphagnum, where the pale rein-orchis hides and the white cotton-rose lifts its plumes. In his hill-side cavern, with its many exits, tunneled deep beneath the great beech-hole in the distant wood, he might escape the heat. But here, in the green penumbra of the swamp, he has the ceaseless plash and flow of running water to render doubly cool the murmur of the cedar's resinous boughs. It is his summer sanctuary, his hermitage from the heat. Full of shy surprises, cool in summer and warm in winter, invested with an atmosphere of its own in keeping with the perpetual twilight beneath its roofage, he loves its rest and calm. Less wild and beauteous than he, the Cecropia moth that floats through its sequestered glooms, the dragon-fly skimming its watery mirror, the trout that dart through its dusky pools.

The treacherous tamarack-swamp stretched away to the southward like an impregnable barrier. On the sharp crust of the snow the lacerated feet of the hounds had left a carmine trail. Hounds and hunters were already tired and sore from the continuous strain, while the fox, to all appearances, was still as fresh as when he first led off, two days previous, fifteen miles away.

The afternoon shadows were lengthening, and the brief wintry twilight would soon enfold the slumberous hills. But in the crisp, tenuous air, and the tranquil splendor of the dying day, I almost forgot the loss of the fox, as, resting from our fatiguing tramp, we watched the sun sink behind the empurpled hills, and the moon merge through the roseate after-glow to light him on his way. Yet, why should I be disappointed? After all, was not mine the experience of every one who had been lured by the Silver Fox of Hunt's Hollow? The Brooks' Grove and Geneseo hounds had long since grown languid in his pursuit, and tried

dogs and hunters from afar had relinquished the chase after repeated failures. Did he in truth roam the solitudes on moonlight nights, leading a phantom pack, as some of the country-folk averred; and was it his phantom bark they heard, like a laugh of derision through the hollows of the hills?

Urgent business requiring my presence in town the following day, it was not until over a fortnight afterward that I was enabled to resume the chase. The pursuit was unavailing, I had inwardly resolved, yet I was powerless to relinquish it without further efforts. Night after night in dreams was I haunted by a phantom fox, and the baying of phantom hounds was unceasingly ringing in my ears. A wraith of his flitting form was ever before me, leading his pursuers along the precipitous cliffs of the Genesee, until, weary of the race, and turning for a farewell view of the hounds, he leaped from the verge of the precipice to meet a ghastly death on the rocks of the river beneath. Perchance my latest addition to the pack—"Sound-

er," a powerful, clean-built hound, remarkably fast, and noted for his marvelous nose and staying powers—might aid me in my apparently hopeless emprise.

Prompted by a telegram from Nelson, the *genius loci* who accompanied us on the previous chase, an evening train brought me once more to the abode of Old Silver. There was an excellent tracking snow of three or four inches, and the outlook was promising for a fair hunting day on the morrow. The fox had "treed" in the tamarack-swamp, my informant stated; for, upon his resuming the hunt after my departure, no traces of him were to be found, and it were useless to attempt to discover him in the wilderness of heavy timber and denser undergrowth.

Four days after my departure Nelson and a companion, while coursing the white-hare beyond Portage, unexpectedly crossed the path of the silver-gray. "We had a fine, full-blooded fox-hound," the former proceeded to relate, "who would run rabbits until the track was

crossed by a fox-track, when he would desert the old scent for the new. We were following a fresh rabbit-track, when the dog started at right angles from the line we were taking, and all at once a silver fox broke in sight some thirty rods ahead of the hound. Although encountered so suddenly, he seemed to be in no hurry, but continued on an easy canter toward a deep gully in the direction of the river. Following as rapidly as we could, and surmising where he was making for, we took advantage of the run by crossing the woods and fields, in order to head him off on the circle he was taking. This brought us to the ravine beyond Stanton's Corners, about two miles from the river. From a clear spot on the upper side we had a good view of the fox, with the hound close behind, and we thought everything was favorable for a shot at him as he came up from the gully. But, contrary to our expectation, when he reached the bottom of the glen he turned straight to the left, scaling the steep hill-side in a twinkling, and distancing the dog.

Again we left the trail, and by nearly doubling on our tracks tried to cut him off at the point where we first saw him. We could hear the dog giving tongue every few minutes, so we could form a very fair opinion of the direction he was taking. In this we were not mistaken, for, on coming out of a neck of woods, we perceived him again on the same trail that old Ranger had started him six hours before; but, instead of taking the rounds this time, he led straight out for the swamp on the road from Hunt's Hollow to Portage, crossing the railway, and making for the heavy timber on the right. He was greatly in the lead, and, as it was already dark, we called in the old dog and abandoned the chase.

"Old Silver was not seen again for nearly a week," continued my informant, "when George Miller observed him crossing the road, one evening, near High Point, on the bluff north of Portage. There was a strange hound after him, the dog's protruding tongue and jaded appearance evincing a prolonged chase, the fox show-

ing no signs of distress. Miller was without a gun, and so did not follow. On going to his barn next morning, he perceived a hound stretched at the foot of the straw-stack, which a second look disclosed to be the strange dog he saw after Old Silver the evening before. His feet were cut and bleeding and very badly swollen, and his sides torn and lacerated by briars. A day or two afterward Miller heard that a man at Stony Brook Glen had lost a dog which answered the description of the one he had in his possession. When, later, his owner came to compare the time the dog started after the fox with the time that Miller saw him after the fox, it was found the dog had been on a steady chase from Saturday morning till Tuesday night! The party who came for the dog said the hunters in his vicinity had tried for four winters to capture the fox; but, though they had sometimes got almost near enough to shoot him, he would always manage to elude them. As for trapping him, he claimed that this was utterly impossi-

ble; while they could run him all day, only to lose him at night, and the next morning could seldom find trail fresh enough to get the dogs to work."

My previous impression thus seemed additionally confirmed; the silver-gray was an eidolon, and bore a charmed life. Chance alone—a single chance in a thousand—might yield me his coveted pelt, if Sounder did not prove a match for his speed. This time the object of our quest was started near the State road in the town of Granger, south of Nunda, the fox leading at once toward the distant gully beyond Hunt's Hollow. Anticipating that he might double on his trail, I had subsequently taken position on a commanding ridge or hog's-back, some three miles south of the latter point, in years long since a favorite lookout of the Indians, and signal-station of the Tuscaroras when the red-man roamed the Livingston hills.

The bright sunshine of early morning had given place meanwhile to ominous clouds, and

a chill east wind had risen during the afternoon. Stealthily a dense mist stole along the hills, enveloping the landscape with its pallid shroud. At intervals the fog would lift for a moment, disclosing the frowning cliffs of the river beyond, and the dark crowns of the evergreens in the vast forest beneath. A querulous gust rose and died away through the hillsides, moaning among the hemlocks, and sobbing amid the leaves of the hornbeams. The low warble of the tree-sparrow and sweet lisp of the chickadee had ceased in the thickets. Only the ceaseless drip-drip from the trees, the rush of the rapids, and roar of the falls in the gorge below, with now and then the muffled voices of the hounds, far away to the windward, broke the impressive silence of the solitudes. Was it fancy?—the very birches and aspens above me seemed waving their wan and spectral arms, as if mutely imploring me to spare the life of the creature who was about to cross my path. For, by an intuition that no reasoning could dispel, I knew to a certain-

ty that he would pass in all his beauty close to the spot where I stood. After weeks of pursuing his evasive shadow his robes would finally be mine. A touch of the trigger, a puff of smoke, a sharp report, and he would fall forward instantly in his tracks, as the leaden missile crashed through his brain. There would be no pain nor torture; death would be immediate; and the echoes of the volley, as they reverberated through the valleys which had been caressed by his loving tread, would voice his elegy:

Mourn, Spring, thou darling of the year!
Ilk cowslip cup shall keep a tear:
Thou Summer, while each corny spear
 Shoots up its head,
Thy gay, green flowery tresses shear
 For him that's dead.

For the most pervading and furtive spirit of the wild-woods would have forever fled when his footstep ceased to rove their rustling recesses, and his shadow no longer fell upon the mossy floor.

Still, the music of the pack continued to

drift down the wind, steadily breaking through the fog in a deeper wave of sound. Audibly and surely the chase was approaching; unless the fox suddenly altered his course, he must soon pass by. He could scarcely perceive me through the thick mist and the shelter of the saplings; while the wind, blowing upward to the knoll, would prevent his detecting my presence through his scent from the runway immediately below me. Ah, the beauty, the indescribable beauty of the silver-gray, when, leading the foremost of the pack, he came speeding on, laying the ghostly landscape behind him in his stride! Was it but a dream, after all—a ghostly landscape with a ghostly fox and ghostly hounds? A few rods more, and he would be within range of the charge that would forever stop him in his fleet career!

Reviewing the chase, whose every incident is indelibly stamped upon my memory, I might explain, were it worth the while, how the snapping of a dead branch under foot, just ere the

rifle's report rang out upon the air, caused the fox to swerve suddenly in his course; and how, instantly doubling his speed, he vanished in the mist.

The morning dawned clear and radiant, and, on arising, I looked out upon an enchanted land. On every hand—through the fretted hallways of the hemlocks, over the luminous dome of the hill-sides, upon the glittering stubble of the fields—the hoar-frost had set its magic touch. I could at least bask in the splendor of the sylvan scene, even though I might not hope to secure the silver-gray. This, I knew, was beyond mortal power; at the most I might obtain a farewell view of his haunting beauty to treasure as a cherished memory.

Was it for me to contest his woodland craft, to cope on his own vantage-ground with his surpassing cunning? The plaintive minor of the breeze that forever vibrated through the alleys of his stronghold, perchance might impart his secrets could I interpret the

accents with which it charmed the tree-tops
above. The crow, whose raucous bass echoed
through the aisles of the covert; the nut-hatch,
whose busy mallet
was never stilled;
the hawk,



whose searching glance es-
pied every movement
of the landscape, might
have revealed
his movements
were their utterances expressed in an in-
telligible tongue. All the wild animate life
upon which he had preyed might have be-
trayed him—the grouse who had escaped his

strategy; the hares who had crouched before his footfall; the ground-birds who had been a witness to his guile. But the song of the wind went on unchanged in the pines, and the rap-torial denizens of the covers kept their own counsels during my quest for the silver-gray. Did not the friendly shadows ever dance for him, and the very tree-trunks intervene their defensive screen? The breeze but bore him the scent of his foes, and the hawk's warning cry but proclaimed his danger from afar.

Fatigued from the long run, and discouraged by repeated failures, the hounds were slow in recovering the trail. The wintry day was wearing on ere he was again started at the precise point where he had been sprung the morning before—in the same woods near the State road in the town of Granger—the fox at once heading for the ravine beyond Hunt's Hollow. Doubling on his track subsequently, he led in a southerly direction for a few miles, then eastward into Grove, turning thence directly north toward the river. He had lost none of his

speed, neither had he exhausted his cunning, having led from the onset a long way in advance of the dogs, and having repeatedly thrown them off the scent.

Twice through my field-glass I caught sight of his glorious form—once leisurely crossing a distant ridge, and again on the edge of a remote beech-knoll—running back and forth on the trunk of a fallen tree, ere leaping as far as he could upon a root-fence which skirted the field. Along this he traveled for a considerable distance until he came to a swamp, when he disappeared in the thicket. Which way would he next wheel in the erratic mazes of his flight? There remained but a few hours until darkness, and to-day would end my chase for a phantom it was hopeless to pursue.

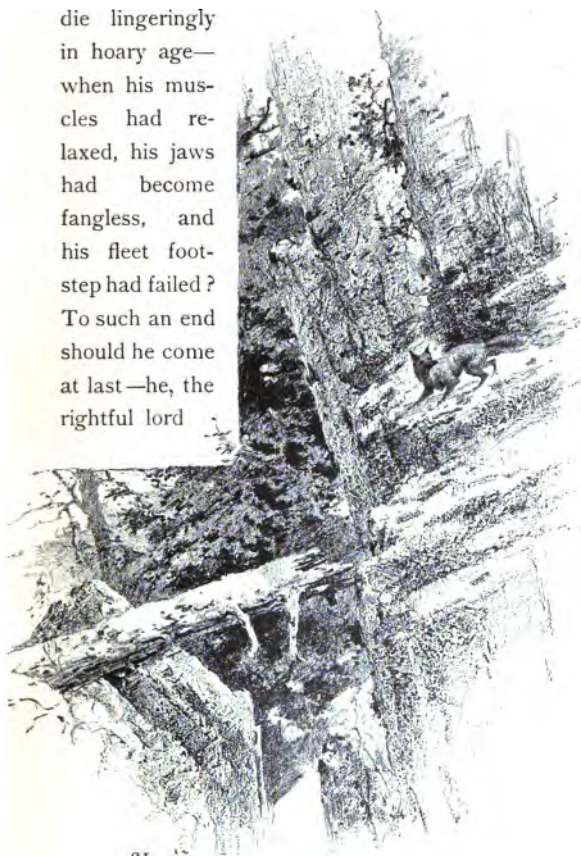
At precisely five by the clock of the sun we discerned him plainly for the third time that memorable day, near the precipitous cliffs of the Genesee, above St. Helena. Never shall I forget the ethereal sight he presented as he glided along the knoll, with the hounds

so tired as almost to drop in their tracks—the setting sun shedding its light upon his lustrous fur, his supple frame outlined in distinct shadow on the snow upon the hill-side above. His gait was perceptibly slower. Was he finally becoming weary of the remorseless chase, and had the pace begun to tell upon his sinews of steel? His brilliant hazel eye, might it no longer mark the seasons wax and wane; his magnificent brush, would it never more steady him in his wonderful flights? Must he, in truth, give up when the race was almost run, and he had well-nigh reached the goal? Swiftly in the hyemal evening the dusk would fall upon the scene, and, encompassing all the corridors of the covers, obscure the landscape with its protecting pall. A burst of his wonted speed, a half-hour's race for his life, and he would be out of reach of the hounds. Still his pace remained unquickened; his jaded muscles refused to respond to a further tension.

And yet, in the inexorable decree of Fate,

from which even vulpine strategy is of no avail, Death must some time claim him for its own. Where were its sting, that he should not face it boldly in his prime? The race is not alway to the swift nor the battle to the strong; but time and chance happeneth to them all. Sooner or later the end must come—the deep sleep which knoweth no awakening. Past, then, the bane of declining years, the harassing dread of capture, the constant struggle for his freedom. The hero of many battles, he had lived his life valiantly, to leave it crowned with renown. Returning to their summer home, the white-throat and hermit would hymn his eulogy in their sweetest strains, and the mourning-dove, and all the sylvan choir, would chant a coronach for the departed wild-wood king. Around his hill-side den the fairy-ring would weave its mystic circle, the evening primrose light its lamp, the twin-flower toll its bells. Were it not far preferable he should close his days amid the mad excitement of the chase, than that he should live on to

die lingeringly
in hoary age—
when his mus-
cles had re-
laxed, his jaws
had become
fangless, and
his fleet foot-
step had failed?
To such an end
should he come
at last—he, the
rightful lord



of the woodlands—his fur torn by awaiting beasts, and his eyes plucked out by hovering birds of prey?

He had now approached so near the High Banks that his capture was trebly assured. To jump from the cliff were certain death; of necessity he must turn on his trail; and, surrounded as he was, how might his phenomenal craft avail him? With no faintest breath of wind below, a sigh arose from the snow-laden summits of the hemlocks—a murmur and dirge of the forest within whose precincts he had so often found a haven from his foes. Even now he turned for a farewell view of his pursuers. The hoarse growl of the river frothing on its rocky bed resounded from the gorge beneath, as if impatient for its prey. Ah, at whatever the price, how gladly would I have relinquished his lovely robes, could I but have obtained his freedom; could I, at the last, have spared the life I had so eagerly sought to obtain! But, surely—so oft had he escaped before at the supreme moment when the hounds had been

close upon him—there must yet be some way of escape, in spite of the frowning precipice beyond.

Etched against the crimson after-glow, it was the last time I ever beheld his graceful form; for, still continuing toward the brink of the abyss, he suddenly vanished from the sight of hunters and hounds! By a circuitous descent down the banks we discovered Sounder and Music, the foremost of the pack, crushed to a shapeless mass on the second sharp rocks below. But we searched in vain for a trace of the silver-gray,

Who stayed not for brake, and who stopped not for
stone,
Who rode all unarmed, and who rode all alone!

Gathering all of his forces for the final effort, had he designedly overleaped the second rocks, to perish in the rapids, where search were unavailing? Better far to meet his fate in the swirl of the angry waters, than to be mangled by the cruel tushes of the hounds!

You should ford the Genesee on the rapids above St. Helena, as I did, opposite the cliffs where the fox made his fearful leap. With a powerful field-glass and careful scrutiny you may then discern the projecting crag upon which he jumped from the dizzy brink of the precipice, and the long, narrow, overhanging sandstone ledge along which he crept; where the hounds dared not follow, and whence he returned, under cover of the darkness, by means of the prostrate tree-trunk that has lodged across the chasm. My story, down to its most infinitesimal details, you may hear confirmed by every inhabitant of the section where the fox still eludes the skill of the most experienced hunters, and baffles the fastest hounds. Not a myth or a dream is The Silver Fox of Hunt's Hollow, whose beauty no pen may do justice to; but an existing, breathing reality, more beautiful than any dream.

It was not without a poignant feeling of alarm that, since recounting the history of Old

Silver, the following item in the *Nunda News* arrested my attention :

“ William Hay received Saturday last two hundred and twenty-five dollars for furs he had gathered in five weeks' time in this vicinity. The silver-fox skin mentioned last week brought him in one hundred and twenty-five dollars.”

Alas ! could it be the old Silver-Gray, the Hero of Hunt's Hollow, who had been thus wantonly slain for a hundred pieces of silver ? To my immediate inquiry by telegraph I received this reply from Nelson :

“ The silver-fox noted in the item is not Old Silver ; he has been seen farther south since then, and known by his peculiar track.”

“ It is well,” I moralized to my sweetheart, “ that I failed to capture the silver-gray. To have taken his radiant life—admitting it were possible to have taken it—would be to denude the woodlands of their most sylvan attribute and expression ; to strip them of their incarnate

wild-wood charm. With him for their lord and warder, their solitudes possess a deeper meaning, their brooks flow on with a sweeter song. For every denizen of the forest fane, every living, pulsating thing that was familiar with his presence, would miss his haunting grace and beauty—the squirrel in the tree, the warbler on her nest, the butterfly upon the flower, the very hares and rabbits upon which he preyed! Ay, the shadows and the mighty trees, the hamadryads and the unseen spirits of the wood must mourn his loss, when, his lease of life accomplished, a higher than a human power shall lead him to his long and dreamless sleep."



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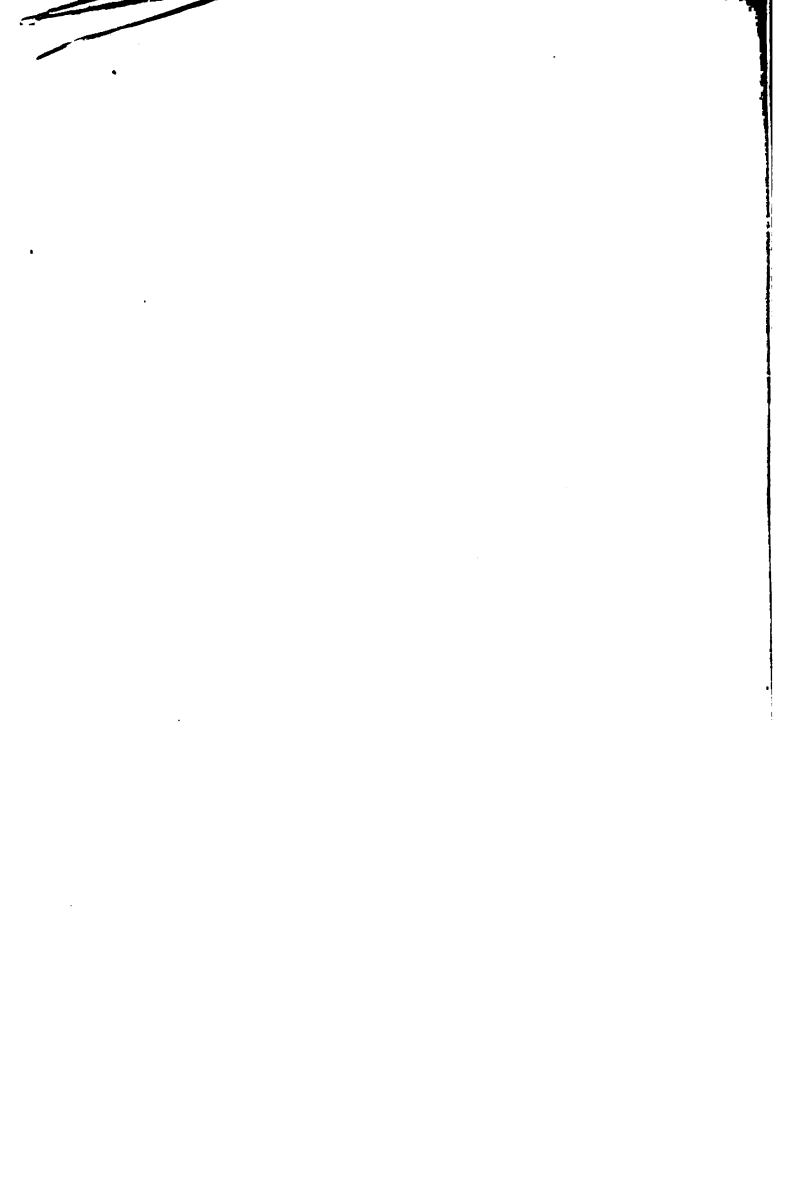
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